
Imprimatur ,

Geo. Royse, R. R.
in Christo Patri ac
Domino Domino
Johanni Archiep.
Cantuar. a Sacris
Domest.

April 23d, 1692.

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~~7f-18-29~~

THE ^{7. 41. 80}
EXCELLENCY
OF
Moral Vertue,

FROM THE
Serious Exhortation of *St. Paul*
to the Practice of it.
In several Discourses upon *Phil. 4. 8.*

To which is added, A
Discourse of Sincerity,

FROM
JOHN i. 47.

By HENRY HALLTWELL,
Vicar of *Cowfold*, in *Suffex*.

LONDON,
Printed for James Adamson, at the
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Church-Yard, 1692.



150:10

To the most Reverend
Father in God, *JOHN*,
by the Divine Provi-
dence, Lord Archbi-
shop of *Canterbury*, Pri-
mate of all *England* and
Metropolitan, and one
of their Majesties most
Honourable Privy-
Council, &c.

May it please your Grace

TO accept of the fol-
lowing Discourses
as a Testimony of
my Humble Thankfulness for
your Grace's Favours towards
me.

Epistle Dedicatory.

*me. The Substance of them was lately delivered to a small Country Auditory, into whose Minds I endeavoured to instill a Generous Sense of Virtue, being Convinced not only of the Great Usefulness of such Monitory Exhortations in a Degenerate Age, but fully persuaded, that if Men Neglect the Sincere Practice of Virtue, the Renovation of their Minds into the faultless Image of Jesus will never effectually be carried on. I most Humbly Beg your Grace's Pardon for their Imperfections, hoping your Grace will not be offend-
ed*

Epistle Dedicatory.

ed at the Meanness of an Offering which proceeds only from a Desire of doing Good. And to Assure your Grace of the Uprightness of my Intentions herein, I have added as an Appendix I judged not unsuitable to the foregoing Discourses, one likewise of Sincerity, in which your Grace will see the high Esteem and Value I have of that Lovely Qualification.

Now that God would preserve your Grace in Health and Prosperity for the Good and Benefit of this Church and Nation, and after you
have

Epistle Dedicatory.

*have finished your Course,
that your Grace may receive
a never fading Crown of
Glory when the chief Shep=
herd shall appear, is the
heartly Prayer of*

My Lord,

Your Grace's most Humble,

and most Affectionate,

Servant,

Henry Hallywell.

Phil. 4. 8.

Finally Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things.

THE true life and spirit of Religion consists not in dry and barren Speculation, but in Practice: And that we may the better know what is the matter of our Practice, the Apostle here
 B : instances

instances in divers Moral Duties which frequently occur in the life of Man ; and indeed seems to resolve all Religion into the serious and hearty Regulation of the Life and Actions according to the Rules and Measures of Virtue.

And because Morality by some hath been too much slighted and undervalued, and a Moral-Man looked upon but as a more refined Reprobate or Cast-away, I shall endeavour to make good this in the first place,

That the sincere Practice of Moral Virtue is the Ground work and Foundation of that Life by which we must be saved : or, That the main and substantial part of Religion consists in the Practice of Moral Virtue.

For to be a Christian is to be all this that the Apostle mentions ; to be true in our Words and Promises, to be honest in walking

walking answerably to the Dignity of our Natures, to be just in our dealings one with another, to be pure in our Bodies and Souls, and to practise such things as are lovely and of good report amongst the best and wisest Men.

And if there were any Pagans that ever attained to this high and excellent pitch, they must be reckoned amongst those that were *ὑποταγῇ εἰς βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ* fitly disposed *Luke 9. 62.* for the Kingdom of God, and *Acts 13.* *πταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, ranked and *48.* set in order for Eternal Life. And whoever thinks himself to be a Christian without the due observance of these and such like Duties which flow from true and right Reason, he has the name indeed, but wants the thing it self, and does but cheat and deceive himself, and will hereafter feel the ill effects of his delusion.

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sion when he comes into the other World.

By Morality then I understand all these Virtues the Apostle mentions, and whatever else is consonant to true and right Reason, and tends to the improving and bettering the Life of Man.

I do not say that the Practice of these Virtues alone will save a Man, because the Gospel is set at something a higher Pitch, and requires such a Nature as cannot be attained barely by these: But this I say, that all these Virtues are the foundation of our Salvation, and without the sincere Practice of these we shall never be saved. They are as necessary to Salvation, as the casting of Corn into the Ground is to the future Harvest. And he that is not right in the practice of these, let him otherwise never so much applaud himself, is so far from being

ing a true Christian, that he is but a dissembling Hypocrite both in the sight of God and Man.

Now that the main of Christian Religion consists in the Practice of Moral-Virtue will appear ;

1. In that God in the Scriptures seems to set this as the ultimate end and perfection of Religion.

Micah 6. 8. *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?* that is, God requires nothing more or greater in comparison of these : for otherwise there were other things which God required as immediate parts of his Worship, and a Prevarication in which had doubtless been a very great sin ; but he required the Practice of these Virtues chiefly, and in respect

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spect

spect of themselves, and declares, that the doing these things is more grateful to him than a Thousand Sacrifices. And Christ himself approved of what the Scribe said, *Mark 12. 33.* That *to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our understanding, and with all our Soul, and with all our strength, and to love our Neighbour as our selves, is more than all Burnt Offerings and Sacrifices.* For though God had commanded the Daily Sacrifice to be offered, yet the practice of Moral Virtue was more pleasing to him, this having an inward Goodness and Loveliness in it, which the other had not. Nay, God disdains and reproaches even the Acts of his own Worship, when they are performed by Men of unholy Lives and Conversations, as we read *Isa. 1. 11.* *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices*

unto me, saith the Lord ? I am full of the Burnt-Offerings of Rams, and the fat of fed Beasts, and I delight not in the blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-goats. Here is a manifest slighting even of those very Acts of Worship which he himself had enjoined ; and what should be the reason that the Lord should abhor his own Offering, and not be pleased with what he himself had commanded ? We find it expressed, *Verse 15. Your hands are full of Blood.* They were guilty of open Violations and Transgressions of the Eternal Laws of Nature. Therefore it follows, *Verse 16. Wash ye, make ye clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, and plead for the Widow.*

From hence you see that it is clear as the Sun, that God puts a higher estimate and value upon the faithful discharge of these Moral Duties of Religion, than he does upon the immediate Acts of his own Worship. And that whatsoever Service is performed to him, it is no further acceptable than as it stands in Conjunction with Acts of Kindness, Beneficence, Justice, and Equity, towards our Fellow-Creatures. Nay our Saviour himself and his Apostles, when they would give us a brief Summary or Compendium of Religion, they always make the practice of Moral-Virtue to be the main part and foundation of it. For thus our blessed Lord himself says, that to love God and our Neighbour, are the substance of the Law and the Prophets. And St. James tells us, *Chap. 1. 27.* that *true Religi-*

on before God and the Father is this, To visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World.

Moreover, the value that God puts upon Moral-Virtue, is so great, that when the Scripture gives a Character of any person that is dear and acceptable to God, the description is for the most part drawn from instances of Morality. In the 31st Chapter of *Job*, we find that Holy Man making a profession of his Innocency and Integrity, and all the instances he gives of it, are but so many Acts of Moral-Virtue; yet has he this Commendation given him, *That he was a perfect and upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed Evil, Job 1. 1.* And that which endeared *Cornelius* to God, and made him be thought worthy of the Visit of
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an Angel first, and then of an Apostle, was, (as we read, *Acts* 10. 2.) *That he was a just and devout Man, one that feared God with all his House, and gave much Alms to the people; and prayed to God always.* Infomuch that St. Peter makes this general Deduction and Conclusion from it, *Verse 34, 35. Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every Nation he that fears him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* As if the Apostle had said, In all times and ages whoever he be, and in whatsoever part of the World, that acknowledges the being of a God, and sincerely honours him, and lives up as near as he can to the Prescriptions of right Reason, that Almighty Being looks down with a favourable Eye upon him.



Certain

Certain it is, that Christianity it self whose ultimate end is the Salvation and Blessedness of Mankind hath therefore appeared, (saith St. Paul, Tit. 2. 12.) teaching us, *That denying all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World.* Which is nothing but the perfection of Morality. And that we may conclude this Argument, when the Apostle would give us the Character of a compleat and full grown Christian, he says, *Heb. 5. 14.* that he is such a one who by reason of use hath his Senses exercised to discern both good and evil. So that the Perfection of all Religion is made to consist in having a vital relish and discrimination of good and evil.

2. By

2. By these Moral Actions we partake of the Nature of God. The Apostle in 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. makes the ultimate End and grand Design of Christian Religion, to be our partaking of a Divine Nature. Now the Nature of God, as it is communicated to us, does not consist in Wisdom or Power, but in Goodness and Truth, in Holyness, Justice and Equity, in Love, Commiseration and Pity. All which are Moral Excellencies and Perfections, and as we partake more or less of them, so do we more or less resemble and draw down God into our Souls. The Eternity, Omniscience and Omnipotency of God, are no where set as our Copies to follow ; for these are Incommunicable Properties of his Nature ; but in all his Moral-Perfections, we are to imitate and become like unto him. It is by his Holiness
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and Purity, by his Love and Goodness, that God falls down into our Souls, and impregnates them with his Sacred Life, and forms there his own Image and Likeness. And we cannot doubt but that which so nearly resembles God, and is nothing but his own Life and Nature copyed out and implanted in his Creatures, must needs be most of all valued and respected by him; and we are in his Favour as we increase in Holyness and Purity, in Truth, Goodness and Righteousness.

Now that God accounts these Things most dear to him, is evident from that Example he proposes to us for our Imitation, that is, The Example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was God dwelling in our Nature, and in whom that Divine Life, which is the highest Perfection of Men and Angels, was most clearly
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and conspicuously discovered. And the great Things which have made the Life of Christ Exemplary, and set as a Godlike Pattern for us to follow, were

1. His Superlative Love and Charity ; designing not so much his own Interest, as the universal and common Good of all the World. His Kindness and Compassions were not circumscribed to this or that particular sort of Men, but extended and communicated to all that were capable of them. He made no distinction of Age or Sex or Parties, but scattered his Bounty to all, and filled all Places and all Persons with Joy and Gladness by his Presence. And whenever he made use of that Almighty Power which resided in him, it was not to the Harm and Damage, but to the Support and Relief of those he conversed withal.

2. Again,

2. Again, he made his Life an Exemplary Pattern to us in his Humility, and the Resignation of his Mind to the Divine Will and Pleasure. For we never find our Saviour ever arrogating any Praise or Glory to himself, but refers all the Glory of his Actions to God. Infomuch as (though he knew himself to be Innocent and without Sin, yet) he refuses to be called Good, saying, *That none was good, save one, that is, God.* And whatever his Condition was, he never murmured or repined at it, but entirely committed himself to the wise Providence and Disposal of God. Nor did he ever desire the fulfilling his own Will and Desires any further, than they might consist with the good Pleasure of his Heavenly Father.

3. And then lastly, Our Lord has given us a clear Example of an un-

unspotted Purity both of Body and Soul. He conversed with a Wicked and Cenforious World, with Men that lay at the catch to ensnare him, and yet we do not read they could ever fasten any Sin upon him. And as his Soul was ever kept undefiled and unspotted from the World, so his Body was never polluted by any inordinate Pleasure or Excess; but both Body and Soul remained always pure as the Temple of the Living God. Here now is that Divine Nature that we are called to partake of, and this is the perfect Image and Resemblance of the Divinity that we are to be conformed to; and yet these are no other than Moral Vertues; and our partaking of the Nature of God is the conformity of our Souls to these and such like Rules of Eternal Reason.

3. The Practice of Moral Virtues is so absolutely necessary, that without it we can never perform any Christian and Acceptable Service unto God. The Ten Commandments must first be kept before we can arrive to that higher measure of Perfection required of us under the Gospel; and we must first be good Men before we can be good Christians; and none can be good, except he be true and faithful, and just and honest. For what Sign can that Man give that he desires to be like to God in Justice and Equity, who never omits any occasion of injuring and defrauding his Neighbour? How can he be said to be a Follower of Jesus, who went about doing good, that will neither afford Relief to the Bodies or Souls of Men? God is Love, but when Men live in Envy and Hatred and Malice, it

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were strange they should be like to God. Suppose any Person should say, That he desires and hopes to inherit the pure State of Angels hereafter ; can we believe this, when we see him at the same time pursuing all beastly and sensual Pleasures ? The Practice of Moral Vertue is a thing that God has put into our Power, and he requires that we should be faithful to it ; because from hence Springs that new Nature which is wrought in us by the overshadowing Power of the Spirit of God. There is such a near connection between these Moral Virtues, and that Divine Life which Jesus came to plant in our Souls, that one cannot be without the other ; nor can we perform any Service acceptable to God, while we either neglect, or are false in the Practice of these.

These

These are the Arguments which may serve to enforce the serious Practice of Vertue in general upon us, and to let us know that the esteem which God hath of us, is according to our Growth and Progress in it. All other Qualifications are of little or no worth in Comparison of this. And if we are defective here, though we are otherwise never so gloriously accomplished, it will do us no good.

We may now briefly consider the Incouragements the Apostle gives to the faithful Discharge of these Virtues in general. They are these two, express'd, v. 9.

i. That these things are not new nor strange; the Apostle desires nothing but what they had learnt, and heard, and seen in him. If they feared the Truth of what he said, they should look

on him, and see if his Life and Actions were not conformable to his Doctrin. Examples are very great Encouragements to a Holy Life ; and Christians ought not to walk every Man by himself, but imitate and stir up and follow one another in the same Course of Holiness. That as they offer up the same Common Petitions and Prayers for themselves and all Mankind, so they should all strive together and incourage one another in the same way of Virtue ; that so at last they may all come to the glory and felicity of Jesus who is gone before them.

2. He tells them the God of Peace should be with them in so doing. The highest Motive and Incentive to the Practice of Holiness and Virtue that can be thought of. Though all the
World

World be in a Storm and Confusion about us, yet so long as we are Holy and Good, that God who Creates an Everlasting Peace for Righteous Men, shall be always with us. And where he is present there is an Eternal Quietness and Calm: God will never forsake his own Life and Nature; and Holiness being the very Nature of God, he cannot but love and regard it wherever he finds it in any person. Though Earthly Parents may forget their Children, yet God cannot be unmindful of those that are Good, Virtuous and Holy. He can never withdraw himself from them, but will continually visit them with his Powerful Love. He gives them that Peace of Conscience in this Life, that the World cannot give, and brings them at last to that Land of Peace and Blessedness where there is no

Disturbance or Alteration.

Ὅσα ἀληθῆ.

Whatsoever things are true.

The Gospel being given to amend the Manners, and reform the Lives of Mankind, and to bring into use those Virtues which began to grow out of fashion through the general Wickedness and Corruption of the World; the Apostle begins with Truth; *Whatsoever things are true.*

Now Truth is to be considered,

1. As it refers purely to the Understanding.

2. As it relates to Practice.

First in Opinions, and in reference to our belief of any Doctrine

Strin that is propounded to us ;
and thus 'tis opposed to Error or
Falshood and Heresie. So that
when the Apostle enjoins us to
follow those things that are true,
he would have us entertain no o-
ther Doctrins but such as are
purely Christian.

Now although a good Christi-
an that believes the Scriptures,
and sincerely endeavours to un-
derstand them aright, and to leād
his Life according to them, may
be well assured, that God will
keep him from all Errors that are
destructive of his Salvation ; yet
because Error is so various, and
that there be too many who act
the Devil's part, and make it
their business to delude Harmless
and Innocent Persons ; it will not
be amiss to lay down some few
Rules, whereby we may discern
true Doctrins from false, and se-
cure our selves in a good measure

from being imposed upon. For the Scripture being a Book that is not all of the same Nature, nor written by one Man in the same Method and Style, but is filled in some places with Advices and Counsels to that which is best ; sometimes with Precepts and Commands ; and in other places with dark and obscure Prophecies ; and lastly, with the choicest Parts of true Reason and Knowledg, though often delivered in somewhat a Mysterious way : These things being considered, it is impossible that all Men should have the same Thoughts and Apprehensions, and conceive of all places in the Scripture after the same way and manner. Hence it comes to pass that some Men through weakness and carelesness, and others out of design, broach many Errors and Falshoods, and spread them abroad in the World. There-

Therefore if there may be some plain Rules set down, which may serve as a Mark to guide us in a doubtful and dangerous way, it cannot but be gratefully received by every one that loves Ingenuity and Truth.

1. Therefore, whatever Doctrine is repugnant and inconsistent with the Goodness, Wisdom and Power of God, it is to be rejected as an Error. For the Goodness, Wisdom and Power of God are so manifest in all things, and in all places, that as no Man can miss of the knowledge of the Being of his Creator, so it cannot be a Truth that seeks to diminish and obscure those Essential Attributes of the Deity which so evidently appear throughout all the Tracts of Immense space.

Thus

Thus then, when we look into the Frame of the World, nay, but into the Fabrick of our own Nature, and see with what wonderful Art and Contrivance things are made, and how each Part is subservient and conspires to one great End and Purpose, that is, for the good of the whole ; this very Consideration, That things are made and framed for Ends and Designs, will lead us to the knowledg of a Conscious and Intelligent Nature, which is no other than an infinitely Good, and Wise, and Powerful God. Therefore if any one should go about to perswade us, that either the Beautiful Frame of this visible World, or the Admirable Structure of Humane Bodies in which is lodged so much Art and Skill, had no other Original but blind Chance and Fortune, and arose from the Fortuitous Coalitions of
 Atoms ;

Atoms; we cannot but look upon it at first sight as an Error and Delusion, because it derogates and takes away from that Infinite Power and Wisdom, which we behold in the making even of the least thing in the World.

Again, if any Person should tell us, that God made the greatest part of Mankind on purpose to Damn them, without any Consideration of their Sin and Provocations: It is impossible (keeping our selves to this Rule) that ever we should believe such a Doctrine, because it is so contrary to his Goodness and Love, which as it brought all things into Being for no other end, but that they might be Happy, so it will never destroy or turn any thing out of that Happy State, without it's own demerit and default.

To

To instance once more ; If any Man shall Teach, That the Commands of God are impossible to be performed, and that though he invite all Men, yet he denies sufficient Grace to the greatest part of them, whereby they may be inabled to Obey him, and be Extricated out of their Miserable Condition :

By this Rule we ought to look upon such a Doctrin as a downright Falshood : Because it is certain, that an Infinitely Wise and Good God cannot command and injoin Impossibilities ; nor exact and require Men's Obedience to his Laws, without furnishing them with a sufficient Power whereby to do them. And to do otherwise, would so little deserve the Name of Justice and Equity, that it would be no better than Tyranny and unaccountable Self-will.

Hence

Hence now it follows, not only in these Instances, but in any other Doctrins whatever ; if they any way lessen the Goodness, Wisdom, or Power of God ; if they disparage all or any of these Attributes, such Doctrins can never be true. For Truth is always the same and alike, and is ever found agreeable with the Nature of God, who is the Fountain of all Truth.

2. If any thing be taught that is contrary to the undoubted Principles of sound Reason, or the clear Evidence of Sense, it is to be looked upon as False.

Because Reason is that Lamp or Candle of the Lord which he has lighted and set up in the Soul of Man, whereby it is able to make a difference, and discern between Truth and Falshood. And our Senses are another infallible

lible means of Communicating
 the true Knowledg of things to
 us, when they are found and not
 vitiated, and their Objects duly
 and conveniently Circumstanti-
 ated. Now as our Eyes and Ears
 were given us to discern Objects
 of Sight and Hearing; so are
 our Reasons to discern those
 things that belong to Reason.
 And as no Man, (but such a one
 as is Crazed in his Intellectuals,)
 will distrust his Eyes or Ears
 when their Objects are duly pla-
 ced; so neither will he distrust
 his Reason when it Acts accord-
 ing to those common and self-evi-
 dent Notions upon which all Rea-
 son is founded. And that this
 may yet be more manifest, it is
 to be Considered, that the Na-
 ture of Man is not indifferent to
 Truth or Falshood; that is, no
 Man can believe what he pleases
 whether right or wrong. It is
 not

not in the Power of any to believe that to be True, which he knows to be False, because there is such an ungratefulness and disagreeableness between Falshood and the Rational Nature of Man ; and to believe a Falshood, were to offer Violence to our Rational Faculties.

Wherefore, because it is not in the Power of Man to believe or disbelieve at his Pleasure, his Understanding being limited and bound up by those Eternal Rules of Truth and Falshood, it is clear, that Right Reason must be the measure of Truth and Falshood, and consequently that Doctrine must be False that is contrary to Reason. To give some light to this in a particular Instance : Our Adversaries of the Romish Church say, that Transubstantiation is True, that is, that the Consecrated Wafer, and every

every Crum of it, is the whole and entire Body of Christ that hung upon the Cross : But according to this Rule, it is utterly False, because it is contrary to the Reason and Sense of Mankind. It is contrary to Reason, because Christ's Natural Body cannot be in Heaven, and at the same time, without any continuation of it self, be in a Thousand distant Places upon Earth. And it is contrary to the Evidence of Sense, because Three of our Senses, *viz.* our Tasting, Touching, and Seeing, inform us, that it is still Bread. And if our Faculties may deceive us in their proper Objects, it is impossible we should ever arrive to the certain knowledge of any Thing, but must be Condemn'd to an Eternal Scepticism. But that our Senses are true Judges when they are rightly Circumstantiated, appears from
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all the Miracles which our Saviour wrought, which are only so many Appeals to the Evidence of Sense.

3. Whatever Doctrin or Opinion there be in Religion that does not drive at Holiness of Life, nor design the Perfection of Men's Souls, it is to be looked upon all one as if it were False.

For all the Mysteries and Truths of the Christian Religion are such, as some way or other serve to beget in us a true Fear and Reverence of God, and tend to the making us better. Their Design is to communicate such a knowledge of God and of his Works to us, as may affect our Hearts, and render us more God-like. Holiness is the Intent and Purpose of the whole Gospel, and whatever does not in some measure promote and advance a Pious and

D Religi-

Religious Life , cannot be believed to come from God.

Thus if a Man shall imagine that a bare Naked Faith , without an inward Change and Renovation of the Mind is enough to save him; or if he shall frame to himself any Opinion that gives any Liberty, Indulgence, or Allowance, to any Sin : These and such like Fancies are utterly False and to be Abhorred, because they destroy the great End of Religion, which is the inward Holiness, Purity and Sanctity of the Mind and Spirit.

By these Rules we may Examine the Truth of all Doctrines propounded to us, in order to God and to Religion. And this may serve as an Explication of Truth as it relates to the Understanding.

2. Truth as it relates to Practice, is properly Veracity, and is opposed to Lying and Deceit. To be plain and true-hearted in our Words and Promises according to the simplicity of the Gospel. So that when the Apostle bids us mind such things as are true, it is all one with his Exhortation, *Ephes. 4. 25. Wherefore putting away Lying, speak every Man the Truth with his Neighbour.* For God being a God of Truth, and not capable of deceiving Men either in his Words or Promises, he would have Men to be like unto him. And this Duty is necessary upon these Two Accounts ;

1. From the Conformity and Likeness it hath to the Nature of God.

God is represented in the Old Testament by the Holy One of *Israel* that cannot Lie ; and in

the New , the Apostle Argues from the Immutability of the Nature of God, that it is impossible for him to Lie or to Deceive. For to Lie is a Weakness, Sickness, and Imperfection of the Mind , which God cannot be subject to. No Power or Force can constrain him to do otherwise than his Nature wills ; and his Counsels and Will being directed by an Infinite Goodness and Wisdom, there cannot be in him any Variableness, Inconstancy, or shadow of turning. And he is most like unto God who stands Confidently and Immutably to what is True and Right. For Truth deriving from an Infinite and Almighty Being, is bold, and takes place, when Deceit and Falshood is put to its Shifts, and runs into holes, hating the light. Therefore the wiser Heathens used to say, *That to speak the Truth,*

Truth, and to do Good, were things that made us most like to God. And most certain it is, that the more a Man swerves and declines from Truth, the further he is removed from a Participation of the Nature of God. Hence when the Jews would not believe our Saviour, who testified that Truth he had received of God, he tells them, John 8. 44. They were of their Father the Devil, who was a Liar, and the Father of it. He was the first Inventer and the first Author of Lies in the World : Therefore, (says Christ,) when he speaketh a Lie, he speaketh of his own. 'Tis none of God's Creation, but an effect which he is the sole Cause and Author and Original of. When that foul Spirit had once disjoined and separated himself from God, then he began to Lie and to Deceive, and taught Men to do so too ;

D 3 which

which shewed the weakness of his Nature, when once it became uncentred and unhinged from that Stable and Unchangeable Being who is Truth it self.

2. Truth is the Bond and Foundation of all Civil Society. There is no Commerce or Intercourse between Men in the World without this. And hence it is that a Liar is banished and excluded from all sober Society; and the Reason is, because he destroys that which God and Nature ordained should preserve and maintain a Correspondence one with another. Therefore the very Formality, that is, the Nature of a Lie includes in it a piece of Injustice, and is a real Injury done to another. For Words and Expressions being only the significations of our Minds one to another, every Man has a right of judging
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and understanding by these what is signified to him. Now when a Man tells a Lie, he imposes upon his Neighbour, and deprives him of his Right, by making him to believe quite contrary to what the things are. Therefore our Blessed Saviour tells us, *That for every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall be accountable,* Mat. 12. 36. which is not meant of every impertinent or useless, but every vain or false Word, *i. e.* for every Lie. And there is a great deal of Reason for this, because he that Lies to another; not only betrays the Effeminateness and Weakness of his Nature, but is really injurious to his Neighbour, and destroys and undermines that which is the common Cement and Bond by which Societies are incorporated together.

Wherefore let it be every Man's Care to avoid all Fraud and Dissimulation in his Words and Actions. For nothing is more unbecoming a Man, much more undecent and odious is it in a Christian, who professes a Religion that owns the greatest simplicity and openness, and freedom, and plain-heartedness in the World. Our Blessed Saviour tho' he many times prudently avoided Captious and Ensnaring Questions, yet when he was demanded an Account of that for which he came into the World, *i. e.* whether he were the Christ, or the true Messiah, he owns it, though he knew this very Truth would cost him his Life. When the Cause of God and a good Conscience lies at stake, then Truth must in a particular manner shew it self: For to Dissemble and to be False to this, is to betray the Religion

Religion that we profess. Therefore we find among the Catalogue of those that are excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, are all such as *love and make a Lie, Revel. 22. 15.* not only such as make Deceits and Dissimulations to betray the Truth, but such as love and delight in such Treacherous Actions. And in express terms, God Almighty Threatens all Liars, *Revel. 21. 8. That they shall have their Portion in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone.* Because Falshood is not only contrary to the Nature of God, and sinks us into a Condition the furthest removed from him, but destroys the Interest of Christianity, which requires in all its Professors the greatest Truth and Faithfulness in all their Words and Actions. Christ came to promote a Fair and Innocent Nature
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in the World, which cannot consist with those Blemishes and Spots that attend Lying and Deceit. Truth is plain and easie, but a Lie is crooked and perverse, and made up of many windings and turnings. So that he that considers the Nature of God who is absolute Truth, the Interest of Religion, and the Good of Mankind, will not think such an Exhortation as this to be unseasonable, but will with all diligence pursue and follow such things *as are true.*

Ὅσα σεμνά.

Whatsoever things are honest.

Besides what we have here discoursed of Virtue in general, we may further Note, that these and such like are the Moral Furniture of our Souls ; they are the Transcripts and Derivations of the
Nature

Nature of God, which however by a long Degeneracy they seem to be worn out, and the Traces of them in many to be scarce visible ; yet there is such a Cognition and Congruity between them and the Nature of our Souls, that they are ready to embrace whenever duly offered to them.

After having advised to things true, the Apostle comes next to *whatsoever things are honest* : which is not to be taken in a strict signification, as Honesty is a part of Justice, (for that St. Paul mentions afterwards,) but the word [*honest*] here must be taken in a larger signification, for whatever is becoming. So the Word in the Original imports, *whatever is venerable, grave, decent and becoming*.

For doubtless there is such a thing as Natural Decency and
Decorum,

Decorum, which may be rated according to the different Circumstances and Qualifications of Men. Thus some things may pass irreprehensible in a private Person, which are unbecoming a Prince. And that which may be allowed in another would yet be unfit for a Minister of the Gospel, who is to be *κόσμιος* 1 *Tim.* 3. 2. of good behaviour, which in *Verse* 8. is expressed by *σπουδὴς* Grave, i.e. Adorned with a comely Gravity and Decency in his whole Conversation. So that whatever Degree or Place a Man holds in the World, he ought to Act suitably and agreeably to it. Thus Parents and Masters ought to set their Children and Servants an Example of Gravity and Becomingness. Which though in many things it is to be taken and measured from the Use and Custom

stom of the Place and Nation wherein they are, yet there are some General Rules of becomingness which Nature and Reason will furnish us withal. For *Grave*, and *Venerable*, and *Becoming*, being Things of a Moral Nature, it is certain, that there is some Rule and Measure, whereby these things are to be known, as well as for any other Vertue. As,

I. This Gravity and Becomingness which the Apostle advises us to follow, requires that we Act in all things suitably to the Dignity of our Nature. We are to Consider, that God hath made us Rational Creatures, and endued us with a Power of discerning between Moral Good and Evil. Now we having the Laws of Good and Evil, of what is Base and Deformed, and what is Honest

neft and Becoming engraven upon our Souls, whenever we Transgress thefe Rules, we Act contrary to the Excellency and Dignity of our Nature. Hence was that Precept of the Philofophers, *Reverere teipfum, Reverence thy ſelf, i. e.* Take Care that thou Act not below the Dignity and Eminency of thy Nature. For Right Reafon being that Rule and Meafure according to which all our Actions are to be formed and ſquared, whenever we ſwerve and deviate from that Rule, we go below and debase our Natures.

And this Superiority of Reafon over all our Animal and Brutiſh Paſſions and Inclinations is denoted in *Gen. 1. 28.* where God bids Man *have Dominion over the Fiſh of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the Earth.*

Earth. There are many Passions and Affections and Sensations which arise from the Body, and as they are Innocent in themselves, so they are Necessary to the Perfection of our Nature. Wherefore Man being made after the Image of God, he has likewise an Empire and Rule and Dominion given him over all his Bodily Affections and Inclinations to moderate and guide them in the lesser World, as God doth all the parts of the greater throughout the whole Creation. Thus *St. Jude, Verse 6*, speaking of the Lapsed Angels, τὰς μὴ τηροῦσας τὴν ἀρχὴν which kept not their first Estate, the *Vulgar Latin* has it, *Principatum suum non servaverunt*; which is thus expressed by *Simplicius* after the *Plato*. *In Epist.* *nical* manner, and in terms very p. 163. little different from the *Apostle*, τὰς ἀρχῆς διανοίας ἀμείψαντες, neglecting

lecting that Archical Power wherein consisted their similitude with God, and giving themselves up to the Conduct of their irrational Appetites. Now when the Brutish Life leads us astray from the Government of Reason, and we cast away that ἀρχὴν σκῆπτρον that Principality and Archical Rule wherewith God hath invested us over all our Corporeal Passions and Affections, then the Order of the Creation is inverted, and the Beast governs the Man ; than which nothing can appear more unbecoming and unhand-some to every one that hath any spiritual sense and discerning in him.

It was an Evil which Solomon says he saw under the Sun, *Eccles. 10. 7. Servants upon Horses, and Princes walking as Servants upon the Earth.* The Moral is true in every Wicked Man, in whom

whom Reason is dethron'd, and the lowest of his Appetites and Desires command and force him to obey them. For any Man therefore by Intemperance, Debauchery, and a lawless pursuit after sensual Pleasures, to abuse any Power of his Body, or Faculty of his Soul, he does that which is Dishonest and Uncomely, in forcing Reason from its Seat, and setting up his Brutish Lusts in its stead.

To be carried out in a fond doating upon the World, and an immoderate love of Sensual Vanities, and to follow them with a mighty eagerness and desire, as if they were the ultimate Happiness of Man, it is to debase and dishonour our Souls. It is an abuse and a slur cast upon Humane Nature, because we make use of it to those Purposes which God never intended it for. In

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like manner, to be over-curious in making Provision for the Body, and to bestow too much time in Decking and Adorning that to the Prejudice and Neglect of the Soul ; it is what is unbecoming and dishonourable to a Man ; because 'tis a preferring our worser part before our Souls, which are much the Nobler half of us.

Now as for that Decency which ought to be even in our Apparel, it is to be measured by the Custom and Manners of the best and wisest Persons among whom we live ; whose Judgment in this Case ought by no means to be slighted or undervalued : The State likewise and Condition of Persons is to be Considered ; *They that are gorgeously Apparalled, and live Delicately, (says Christ, Luke 7. 25.) are in King's Courts.* In which
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our Saviour does not condemn the wearing of Rich Apparel, either as a thing undecent or unlawful, but seems to intimate, that the Quality and Condition of Persons is to be observed.

2. Gravity and Comeliness require, that in all our Actions we consider the end of our Beings; and that we Act suitably and agreeably to that end. Every thing is such as is the end to which it is determined; and as the end is more or less Noble, so is the Excellency of a Creature proportionably more or less. Now the highest and best end of Man as a Rational Creature must undoubtedly be the Participation of the Nature of God; for there is nothing in the World more Noble, nothing more Excellent than this. Wherefore all Comeliness and

Decorum consisting in an apt and due order and consent, it follows that we then Act the most Becoming, when we Act the most Agreeably and Consonantly to the Great and Universal End of our Beings. Therefore whatever it be that hinders our Communication with God, and our partaking of his Nature, so far forth it is Dishonest, Vile and Unsuitable to our Intellectual Creature.

It was good Advice of the Wise Ben Syrack, *Ecclesiast.* 7. 36. *Remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss.* For he that Acts agreeably and conformably to the end of his Being, he Acts according to that Order which God hath appointed, and therefore cannot be guilty of any thing that is Base and Unworthy. Let them seriously Consider this who can quietly and contentedly wallow and
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tumble in Sensual Pleasures ; who
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 Creeping upon the Ground, and
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 ly they deviate and swerve from
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 on ! Man was made to be united
 to God, and to Converse with
 him, and therefore hath such Fa-
 culties and Powers in his Soul as
 are fitted to that Purpose. But
 when our Understandings and
 our Wills, when our Love and
 our Desires are taken up with the
 search and complacency they find
 in Worldly and Sensual Objects,
 these Faculties and Passions of
 our Souls are misplaced, which
 breeds a Disorder and a Confusi-
 on ; and this is what in it self
 is dishonest and unbecoming.

Every Excess and Exorbitan-
 cy of our Passions is an Indecen-
 cy, not only as it sinks a Man be-

low the Dignity of his Nature, by Exalting the Brutish Part in him, but as it destroys and contradicts the Great End of his Being, that is, his Participation of the Divine Nature, which is the most Calm, and Uniform, and Sedate thing in the World.

3. Gravity and Becomingness command us to Treat Holy Things and Persons with that Reverence that is due and proper to them.

Virtue is not a thing that is merely acquired, and transfused into us from without, but rather an Exfuscitation and raising up of those Intellectual Principles, *Pro re nata*, and according as the Circumstances of Humane Actions invite, which were Essentially Engraven and Sealed upon the Soul at her first Creation. And amongst the Rest, this is
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one of those Laws or Principles which are Connate and Born with us, *That we should Reverence our Superiors* ; and according to the Degrees of their Superiority, so our Reverence and Esteem and Honour are to be paid. Thus God is to be Honoured with the highest Honour, to be Loved with the greatest Love, and Served with the most Chearful and Sincere Obedience, because he is the most Excellent Being, the Fruitful Cause and Original from whence all Things both in Heaven and Earth flow and derive themselves.

And if it be Judged among all Nations a thing very unbecoming to deride and treat our Parents with Contempt and Scorn, much more is it when this Abuse is offered to God himself, and passes upon Things or Persons that for his sake are called Holy.

It is one of the Great and Crying Sins of this Age, that Men are grown of such a light and frothy Temper, as to think it the greatest part of their Wit to Laugh at the Notion of a God, to Ridicule the Scriptures, and to Expose to Scorn the Sacred Person of our Blessed Saviour. And he that can do this with the finest Fancy, and Cloth the Lewdness of his Mind in the Neatest Dress, is Applauded by the rest of the Herd, and passes for a most Exquisite Wit ; though it be such a kind of Wit as the Devils themselves are either Ashamed or Afraid to make use of, (for they tremble at the thoughts of God,) but these Whifflers who have neither Learning nor good Manners, are neither Afraid nor Ashamed by their Rude Drolling and Buffooning to Expose to Contempt all that which the wisest
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and best Men in the World have always had the greatest Veneration for. And how Unbecoming and Uncivil a Thing this is, the Universal Sense of Mankind speaks aloud, and whoever has but a dram of true Wisdom and Understanding left in him, must needs Abhor it, as contrary to that Gravity which Nature herself instructs Men in.

4. To Expose any Man to Scorn and Contempt for any Imperfection of Body or Mind, is inconsistent with the Rules of Gravity and *Decorum*. For as for the Imbecillities and Imperfections of the Mind, since all Mens Souls were Cast in the same Mould, and the distinction that is made, proceeding from a hidden and reserved Providence altogether unknown to us, it were very Unbecoming to Expose them
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to Scorn for that whose Reasons we are perfectly Ignorant of. A Fool is rather the Object of our Pity and Commiseration, than of our Contempt and Derision. And to Vilifie and Upbraid another for any Defect or Deformity of Body, it is to Upbraid him for that which was no more in his Power to help, than it was in his Power not to be Born. Least of all does it become us to make our selves Merry with other Mens Sins, but rather to Mourn and Weep that they are so degenerate and fallen from the Excellency and Height of their Creation. And as for their Follies, though they may seem to give an Occasion for Derision, yet it is better to imitate the sad and sober Temper of the Holy Jesus, of whom we Read that he sometimes Wept, but never that he Laught.

5. Lastly,

5. Lastly, Christian Gravity will Teach us to avoid all Filthiness, and Foolish Talking and Jestings, which this Apostle St. Paul tells us, *Ephes. 5. 4. Are not convenient, i. e.* they are not agreeable to that Gravity and Modesty that a Christian ought to Observe. Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh, and he that either uses or delights in Obscene and Filthy Discourse, it is a certain sign that the Frame and Temper of his Soul is strangely sunk and blemished in Flesh and Blood. And though *εὐπρεπεία, Urbanity*, which is here rendred [*Jesting*,] be reckoned by *Aristotle* as a Virtue that helps to Accomplish a Man, and those who neither willingly use, nor take any pleasure in Jestings, are by him termed *ἀγριοί Rustical* : Yet as the one will hardly Merit the Name of Virtue,

tue, unless it be used with great Caution and Prudence, so the other is so far from Rusticity, that it may rather seem the Exaltedness and Heroicalness of the Mind, that Sights and Undervalues these little Flirts of Wit as Mean and Trivial. In a Word, We that profess Christianity ought to behave our selves with that Becomingness as that we may neither be Taxed with Superciliousness, Pride, or Scorn, nor yet with a Vain, Light and Frothy Spirit.

"Ora dixit.

Whatsoever things are Just.

We have Discoursed of the Two First of these Virtues mentioned by *St. Paul*; the next in order is to Consider of such things as are Just. And let no Man look upon the Practice of these

these Virtues as Mean and Light, and a thing of no Consequence ; for whoever is defective in these can never truly pretend to Christianity. For the true Christian Life is made up of such things as these are ; and he that is not true in his Words and Promises, that does not act suitably and agreeably to that Nature God has implanted in him, and moreover can allow himself knowingly to defraud his Neighbour, whatever plausible Covering he may shelter himself under, yet he can never pass for a true Christian in the sight of God or Man. We are too apt to believe that we shall be saved, though we transgress these Rules of Virtue ; and we may go on and deceive our selves if we will, but when we come into the other World, we shall find the great Enquiry there to be, whether we have Acted according

according to the Prescriptions of Virtue or not. Hence it is that the Holy Apostle so fervently Exhorts us to the Observance of all Virtue, and particularly of that which is Just.

God has made Man a Reasonable Creature, and by this distinguished him from Brutes. Now Right Reason is nothing but that Eternal Law which God has Engraven upon every Man's Soul; and from this general Law of Reason are derived all Particular Virtues; amongst which this of Justice, which always supposes some Law, to which as to some standing Measure all its Acts must be Reduced and made Conformable. For Just in a large sense is no more than Congruous and Agreeable: And there must be something which of necessity must be the Rule and Measure of this Congruity and Agreeableness;

ness ; which can be nothing else but that Nature of Eternal Reason that God hath formed in our Souls. Hence it follows, that to do that which is Just, is to do that which is Agreeable to Eternal and Immutable Reason.

But the Words of the Apostle here, seem a little more restrained and confined, and when he says, *Whatever things are Just*, it is all one as whatsoever things are Righteous. Now Righteousness that respects others, and then to be Just is to give every Man his due. And that we may know these things the better, Christ gives us an Excellent Rule (which is indeed the foundation of all Justice, and for which the very Heathens Reverenced Christianity,) *Mat. 7. 12. Whatever you would that Men should do to you, do ye so to them.* Into this great Principle all Natural Justice

Justice and Equity may be resolved. Which that we may not abuse by a wrong understanding of our Saviour's meaning, (as some are too apt to do, thereby to palliate, excuse or shift off their Sin) there are Two things to be considered ;

1. That it was not Christ's Mind to Confound the different States and Conditions of Men ; as if by this Law Princes were bound to perform all those Duties back again to their Subjects, that their Subjects do to them : Or that Masters are bound to Obey their Servants , because they would have their Servants Obey them : Or that Parents should Reverence their Children , because their Children are obliged to Reverence and Honour them. For this would destroy all the differences of things , and set Princes

Princes and People, Masters and Servants, Parents and Children, upon equal terms ; which it was never Christ's intent to do. But only to consider how we would be dealt withal, if we were in the place of those we deal with, and to Act accordingly.

2. Nor did our Saviour intend that this Precept , [*of doing as we would be done by,*] should be enlarged to things Unjust, and against the Common and Publick Good of Mankind. As for Example, Because Men that Violate the Sanctions of Right and Just, and break those Laws that are made for the Common Profit of the World, would willingly be freed from Punishment, that therefore we are bound by this Precept of Christ to deal so with them. For this would be to encourage all Wickedness and Impiety,

piety, and to open a Door to all the Villanies and Enormous Actions the Vilest Wretches can think to commit. This were to give a liberty to Wicked Men to Invade that which is anothers, and to Countenance Rapine and Fraud by Christ's Law. Therefore it is certain, that our Saviour who came to discountenance all Vice, and to give Men Rules of Holy Living, and teach them Justice and Equity, never intended his Words should be understood in this Sense. But his Words are to be restrained to whatever is Lawful and Right; that which is agreeable to the Nature of God, who is the highest and most Impartial Justice; a Copy of which he has Transcribed and Written in every Man's Soul.

And so the Command signifies thus much, That we never do that to another, which if we
were

we were in that other Man's place, we would clearly and truly suppose to be Injustice, and against the Laws of Evident and Right Reason. To give a plain instance of this Law ; If a Man were brought into great Difficulties , Straits and Distresses , he would willingly be relieved by those that are able to help him ; therefore now he must do the same to others, and be ready to relieve them. If a Man would not be Defrauded or Oppressed by another, he is bound by our Saviour's Command to bear such an Honest and Just Temper of Mind, as not to Defraud and Undermine, and Circumvent and Oppress any other.

You see now by this what the Apostle means by things that are Just, *viz.* That it is to follow that Excellent Precept of our Saviour, in which all the Parts of

Justice are in a few Words comprized, *i. e.* *To do as we would be done by.*

Now you will better understand, and peradventure remember this, if I shew you in a few particulars what every good Man desires, and would have done to him ; for then you will evidently discern, that what you desire to your selves, you ought to do to others.

1. Every Good Man desires above all things his own Happiness both in this Life and in the next. And since he is so willing to have this for himself, it is a piece of Christian Justice and Charity, that he should stand so affected to all others. He would not have any Man disturb the Ease and Comfort and Quiet of his Life here ; he desires not to be Pained or Grieved, or to have

have his Spirits wasted and consumed with Cares and Miseries. Now if we would but be as Just to others as we are to our selves, we should not only desire but endeavour to help forward, (as far as we are able,) the Happiness of all Mankind. We should Comfort those that are cast down, and pour in the Oil of Joy and Gladness into the Bones that God has broken ; we should never behold any Watry Eyes, but be ready to dry them up ; nor find any Aking Heads, but endeavour to Bind and Ease them. We should never send away any without the real signs of our Charity and Compassion. If there be any that desire our Counsel and Advice in weighty and doubtful Affairs ; any that are wavering and unsettled in Religion, that stand in need of, and want some Faithful Guide to

resolve and settle their Fluctuating Minds : All these are Objects to which this great Law of Justice obliges us to afford our best Skill and Assistance ; because we would desire the same at their Hands, if they were in our Circumstances, and we in theirs.

Let those then reflect seriously upon themselves, and behold how far they are removed from this great Law of Justice and Charity, who take delight in the Miseries of others ; that are pleased in anothers Ruin and Affliction ; that have an inward Joy and Contentment, (as it were) when they have Defrauded and Over-reached another. And yet their own Hearts testify against them, that they would not be served so themselves ; they would not willingly receive such Measure again. Is there not all
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the Reason in the World that Men should abstain from doing that which they are not willing to receive ?

2. Every Good Man would willingly enjoy so much of this Worlds Goods, as may make his passage Comfortable while he is Travelling towards the next. And if every Man wish such things to himself, in Justice he ought not to Envy them to others ; much less ought any to hinder or endeavour to frustrate the honest Industry and Diligence of another to support himself in the World : And the Reason is, because no Man would be Abused so himself. And if Men would always in the performance of their Duty to others strive to square their Actions by this Rule, the World could not be so over-run with Deceit and

Treachery. If every one when he is going to hinder the welfare of another, or Oppress and Encroach upon his Neighbour, would but Ask himself the Question, Would I be pleased to be so dealt with by another ? Or, if I might have my own Choice, would I not desire to be otherwise used by other Men ? Why then should I mete that Measure which I cannot endure to receive again ? This would be the way to free the World from that great Burden of Cruelty and Oppression that it groans under. There would not be so many Complaints of Mens hard Usage of one another ; of their Unmercifulness, and those frequent Instances of Rapine and Extortion. Moreover every Man does not only wish and desire his own Good, but this desire is sincere, and accompanied with real Endeavours. What a Man does
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for himself, he does it with a real intent to do himself good ; and with the same Measure ought all others to be Treated. *Let Love be without Dissimulation*, says St. Paul, *Rom. 12. 9.* Every Man loves himself sincerely, and desires that all others should do so too ; which by way of Justice engages us all to unfeigned Kindness without Hypocrisie. Those that the Apostle mentions in *James 2. 16.* that would give good Words to the Poor and Indigent , and bid them *depart in Peace, and be Warmed and Filled*, but never gave them any thing whereby they should be so ; they would not have been served so themselves : They would have said, that Good Words could not Fill a Hungry Belly, nor Cloth a Naked Back, nor Warm Chill and Benumbed Limbs. Therefore he is Unjust that uses those
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very Courtes he Complains against.

3. Every Man desires that God would Pardon all the Offences done against him ; and if so, then our Saviour's Rule of Justice must take place in reference to others. For if we desire that God would remit the Trespasses done against him, it were Injustice in us to Treasure up the Wrongs of others against us in order to a Retaliation and Revenge. Nay our Blessed Lord is so express in this Duty, that he makes it a part of our Prayers to be forgiven no otherwise than we forgive others. This would make the World better indeed, if all Men were Convinced they ought to walk thus ; and if upon this Conviction they would sincerely endeavour to manage the Course of their Lives accordingly ; there would

would not be so much Hatred and Malice, and Revenge and Bitterness, in the World as there is : But Men's rough and uneven Tempers would be changed and wrought into Mildness and Kindness, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake has forgiven them.

4. Every Good Man would have God supply all his Wants and Necessities, and therefore in Justice we ought to do the same to others. We that must Ask even our Daily Bread at the Bountiful Hands of God, must remember that there is a piece of Justice due to others : Whether it be to supply the Bodily Wants and Necessities of any one ; or whether it be to Comfort a troubled Spirit, and Cheer up a drooping Soul ; or whether it be to defend the Cause of such as
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are injuriously Wronged and Oppressed. All these are parts of Justice that we owe to others, forasmuch as we would have them deal in that fair manner with us. *With what Measure ye mete, it shall be Measured to you,* said our Saviour, *i. e.* you cannot but expect that God and Man should deal with you as you deal with others.

You see now by these particular Instances, (which are all included in that general Precept before mentioned of our Blessed Lord,) how Comprehensive this Virtue of Justice is. And I have the rather made choice of them for their plainness-sake, and the general Influence they have upon all the Actions of our Lives, and also because Justice seems to bear a part, and to be interwoven into the Frame and Nature of all other Virtues, and from the distinct

distinct Consideration of other particular Virtues, the several Offices of Justice may be taken. For as Justice respects God, it is *Piety*, as it relates to Men, it may be termed *Probity*; and because Mercy, and Kindness, and Good-Nature, are due to their respective Objects, so far forth they are comprehended under Justice, and involved in that Golden Rule given by Christ.

It remains now that we briefly prosecute such Inferences as may naturally flow from the Apostles Exhortation to such things as are Just.

I. This Teaches us that Just & Right, are not Arbitrary and Factitious things, and Changeable by Will and Pleasure. They are not things that are merely made so by Law, for then it would be in the Power of Men
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to turn the greatest Villanies into the most Consummate Virtues, and Consecrate Wickedness by the Sanction of a Law. Indeed *Plato* as he is Cited by that Excellently Learned Person *Dr. Cudworth*, represents the Old Atheistick Hypothesis something after this manner, That every Man has an infinite Right to all things, and that whatever his Sensual Appetite desires, (though it be the Murder of another Person,) he has a Right to do it, yet because it is impossible that all Men should have Dominion, and every Man having a Natural Right, or *Jus ad omnia*, it so came to pass, that after Men had been a good while Cutting and Slashing, and Justling against one another, (the State of Nature being a State of War against all,) they became at length weary hereof, and therefore compound-

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ing the business amongst themselves, they agreed together by Pacts and Covenants, neither to do nor suffer Injury, but to submit to Rules of Equality, and make Laws by Compact, in order to their Peaceable Cohabitation, they calling that which was required in those Laws by the Name of Just. Here we have the Sum of the Atheistick Ethicks, whose Foundation is laid (as the forecited Author observes,) in the Villanizing of Humane Nature, as that which has not the least Seeds of Equity and Philanthropy, Charity or Benevolence, but what arises from mere Fear, Imbecillity and Indigency. No Care and Concern for Publick and Common Good, but tends directly to the destruction of all Society. For if there be nothing *φύσιν* but only *θεῶν* Just, that is, If there be
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no such thing as Just and Right Naturally and Antecedently to all Will and Power, but that it wholly arise and flow from Positive Determination, then it will not be Unjust for any Man to break and rescind those very Compacts and Agreements which he himself hath made, as oft as he hath Opportunity and Power so to do. Which must effectually destroy all Society, and leave all Men in a State of War one with another, the Greater and more Powerful, like Brutes, Eternally preying upon and devouring the Weaker. But that there is such a thing as Just and Right by Nature, is pertinently observed by that great Poilosopher Dr. *More*, in his useful Treatise of *Ethicks*, where upon *Andronicus Rhodius* his Definition of Equity, 'That it is that by which the Defect and Error of the Law

lib. 2. c. 6.

' Law is supplied and corrected :
 ' He adds , If there be nothing
 ' Just but by virtue of some
 ' Written Law, what need is
 ' there of Emendation of the
 ' Law, since the Law it self, be
 ' it what it will, makes any
 ' thing Just ? But it is the Pro-
 ' perty of Equity to Correct the
 ' very Law, and to appoint such
 ' things upon Emergent Circum-
 ' stances , which (if he could
 ' have foreseen them) the Le-
 ' gislator himself would have
 ' Constituted and Appointed ;
 ' which yet were very Ridicu-
 ' lous, if the Nature of Just and
 ' Unjust depend wholly upon the
 ' Arbitrament and Pleasure of
 ' the Legislator, and not upon
 ' the Nature and Circumstances
 ' of things themselves. Where-
 fore we are to conceive of Just
 and Right as things Essentially
 inherent in God, who is that E-
 G ternal

ternal and Living Law from whence all Justice and Equity flows. And he has Engraven these Principles in Humane Souls; so that if there had never been any Positive Laws made, yet there would have been such a Nature as Just and Right, which was so Yesterday, to Day, and will be for Ever, Eternally Independent upon all Will whatever.

2. We are informed that all Men in the World have a Right to Justice, and though they be never so Wicked, they ought not to be Injured or Wronged. For Just and Right being Eternal and Unchangeable things, that can never alter, or be otherwise than they are; the outward Circumstances of Men ought to make no alteration in them. Though a Man therefore be never so Wicked

ed, he must not be Defrauded, or Injured, or Oppressed ; because he has a Right by God's Order and Decree to the things of this World , and consequently cannot without Injustice be despoiled of his Propriety. Contrary to the Fancy of some, who think none but Saints have any true Right to Earthly Possessions and Enjoyments ; whereas certainly their Claim is the least, their Holy Lord himself saying, *That his Kingdom was not of this World.* Christ's Religion doth not Justifie an Unrighteous Action, though done to a Wicked Man.

3. It Teaches us that there is no Sin so Black and Heinous as that of Injustice. For as Justice in some sense comprehends all other Virtues under it ; so all Sins have some tincture of Injustice in

them. For there is a Right that is due to God, another to our Neighbour, and a Third to our selves ; and to violate and break any of these is a piece of Injustice. But besides this, the Heinousness of Injustice appears in this, in that it is the most destructive of Societies : It is that which is a manifest Nufance against the well Being of the World, and that which turns the Earth into a desolate Wilderness to be Inhabited only by Wild Beasts. Therefore this Sin being so contrary to the Nature of Man as he is a Sociable Creature, and so opposite to God's Providence and Government of the World, hence it is that there is no Sin so severely taken notice of as this of Injustice. For the Great Lord and Father of all having Ranked all Beings that are capable of Moral Good and Evil, under their
distinctive

distinctive Families, and formed them into several Societies and Corporations, whatever in their respective Precincts deviates from the Rules of Just and Right, must have a more severe Inquiry than any other Fault, forasmuch as it more or less tends to the overthrow or subversion of Society.

4. It Teaches us in all our Actions to follow that which is Just. Which if every Man would carefully endeavour to do, the World would soon be turned into a perfect Heaven, and become once more the Habitation of Righteousness. And why should not Men endeavour to bring on such a Spirit of Benignity and Righteousness, which may put an end to all Rapine, Cruelty and Oppression? That may take off their Minds from the World,

which is commonly the Cause and Root of Injustice ? He that follows that which is Right and Just, will certainly find the Advantage of it. He shall have Peace of Conscience here, and the great Reward of Blessedness hereafter.

Ὅσα ἁγνά.

Whatsoever things are pure.

The Apostle comes now to urge the following and practising such things as are *pure*: The Old Translation renders it *Sancta*, as supposing it to have been Read ἁγία, *Whatsoever things are holy*. Now the Universal Christian or Divine Life being expressed frequently by this general Term of [*Holiness*,] of which *Purity* is an Essential Branch, it may very well be supposed to be comprehended under it: And we have

no reason to depart from the common and more restrained Expression, *Whatsoever things are pure.* Moreover *Sanctum* is no other than *Separatum*, (as *Grotius* observes,) a thing that is separated and set apart from common and impure Uses, and Consecrated to the Service of God. And thus Sanctity is opposed in Scripture to Filthiness or Pollution. Hence it is that the Righteousness of the Saints is compared to [*Fine Linnen, Clean and White* ; for *the fine Linnen is the Righteousness of Saints*, Revel. 19. 8.] in opposition to the Impurities of Sin and Vice, which are denoted by [*Filthy Garments*,] Zech. 3. 4. where *Josbua* being Clothed with Filthy Garments, the Angel says, *Take away the Filthy Garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine Iniquity to pass from thee, and I will*

Cloth thee with change of Raiment.

The Purity then that St. Paul exhorts us here to, is no other than an Essential Part and Branch of the Divine Life, whereby we have so perfect and full a Command over all our Sensual Appetites, and all the Delights and Allurements of Flesh and Blood, that they may not in the least hinder our Union and Conjunction with God, nor by gross and material Steams and Suffusions intercept our sight of that Eternal Pulchritude of the Divine Nature, to which we ought always to have an Eye, and direct all our Actions.

Hence the *Platonists* speak so much of their *ἀρεταὶ καθαρῆς* Purgative Virtues, whereby they cleared the Mind from all those irregular Motions that were raised from the Objects of Sense, or sprung from Corporeal Imagina-
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tion. And indeed the whole Scope and Design of their Philosophy was *μελέτη θανάτου*, a Meditation of Death, a Dying to our Earthly Passions, Appetites and Desires, and a weaning the Soul from an inordinate Love of the Flesh, and a through Purgation from all Carnal and Sensual Lusts, that they might behold *καθαρῶ νοῶ*, with a pure Mind the unspotted and incorrupted Deity.

But whatever they aimed at is more clearly and fully made known to us in the Holy Scriptures, wherein we are commanded to *Mortifie our Members which are upon the Earth*, Coloss. 3. 5. *i. e.* our Earthly Lusts and Affections, which spring from too near a Communication and Adhesion to these our Terrestrial Bodies, such as *Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, Evil Concupiſcence, and Covetouſneſs,*

ness, which is Idolatry. And to encourage them to this so indispensable a Duty, the Apostle uses these two Arguments; the first is in *Verse 6.* *For which things sake, the Wrath of God cometh on the Children of Disobedience, i. e.* upon those who would not be persuaded nor wrought upon by the Motives and Arguments of the Gospel to Change and Reform their Lives. The other Argument is taken from the Profession they had engaged themselves in, *Verse 8.* *But now, you also put off all these, Anger, Wrath, Malice, Blasphemy, Filthy Communication out of your Mouth, &c.* You that now have given up your Names to Christ, and make Profession of his Religion, cannot but know that Christianity gives no Allowance to any of these Impurities and Pollutions, but calls Men to an Imitation of
 God

God who is the highest Purity. Wherefore there is an Indispensible Obligation lying upon all Christians to put off and lay aside all such Corrupt Lusts and Affections. And again, *Rom. 13. 12. The Night is far spent, the Day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the Works of Darknes, and let us put on the Armour of Light. Let us walk honestly as in the Day, not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Strife and Envyng. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof.* By the Day is meant the Time of the Gospel or Christianity appearing to the World : And by the Night is understood that State and Condition of Sin and Vice, wherein the World lay before the appearing of this Great Light. Now as the Light

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is a pure and bright Substance, and the Gospel which we profess, such wherein is no Darknes at all, so it behoves us to Assimilate our selves to it in Works of Purity and Sanctity, and to have no more to do with any of the Deeds of Sin and Vice, which besit only the Spirits of Night and Darknes. And for our Encouragement herein, we ought,

1. To set before our Eyes that sublime Copy and Example of Purity and Holiness which is set forth in the Life of our Blessed Saviour: Who, though he were subject to all the harmless Passions and Infirmities of Mortality, (being made like unto his Brethren in all things, Sin only excepted,) yet kept both his Body and Soul as a Pure Habitation of Righteousness and Temple Consecrated

consecrated wholly unto God ; into
 which he never suffered any thing
 that was defiled and polluted at
 any time to enter. Though he
 Converſed with all ſorts of Per-
 ſons, and his Behaviour was free
 and open, yet he taſted as little
 of Bodily Delights and Pleaſures
 as ever did any Man in the
 World. Yea even where they
 were allowable, he carefully ab-
 ſtained from them, to teach us
 Self-denyal and Mortification,
 and to ſhew us, that though we
 live in the Body, and have an
 intimate Union with it, yet we
 may keep it under Subjection,
 and ſo regulate all its Motions and
 Affections, that our whole Man
 may be a fit Receptacle and Ha-
 bitation for God to take up his
 Abode in. Therefore foreſeeing
 the danger how eaſily Men are
 betrayed by the ſecret Whiſpers
 and charming Inſinuations of
 theſe

these Earthly Bodies to which they are united, like a Faithful Friend he Admonishes them, in *Luke 21. 34. To take heed* *μὴν βαρυνθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι* *lest at any time their hearts be overcharged, i. e. burdened and pressed down with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this Life, which like a heavy weight under which they are not able to stir, keep and detain them from lifting up their Souls to God. For, the Souls of Men though they are confined to Bodies of Earth, and so at the present Inhabitants of this Corruptible World, yet are made with such Capacities as to live with God in Heaven: but by a too free indulging to their Bodies and Corporeal Affections, they are fatally tied and chained down to the Earth; and though they may now and then make some little Efforts and faint Attempts*
to

to ascend to those higher Regions,
 yet it will be utterly impossible
 till they are perfectly disentang-
 led and disengaged from the plea-
 sures and delights of Sense. And
 lest this Faithful Admonition of
 our Lord and Saviour should not
 be sufficient to keep us at a di-
 stance from the ensnaring Inesca-
 tions of Flesh and Blood, he as-
 sures us, *Matth. 5. 8. That it is*
only the pure in Heart that shall
see God. The Philosophers tell us,
 that all like is known by its like,
 and if there were not something
 that were *Congenerous* and *Analo-*
gous to Light in the Eye, the
 whole World would be to us in a
 state of Darknes: In like man-
 ner, unless the Soul be purified
 and cleansed from all dark and
 bodily Affections, and become in
 some measure inlightned where-
 by it may resemble God, it is im-
 possible it should ever see him.
 There-

Therefore our Blessed Saviour giving us so illustrious an Example of all Purity, Temperance and Chastity, and so earnestly recommending the same to all his Followers, not only shews us the Absolute Necessity of the Mortification of our Bodily Lusts and Corruptions, but also the Possibility of attaining to such a state wherein all the Motions of the Body may be brought into a due subordination to our more Divine Powers.

2. We are to consider that this Purity is indispensibly necessary for the attaining Divine Wisdom and Knowledg. There is nothing so much darkens our Understandings, clouds our Judgments, and besots all the Rational Faculties of our Souls, as the bathing and sinking our selves into Bodily Delights and Pleasures. For as the
Corrupt

Corrupt Life of the Body grows and increaseth, so proportionably the Divine and Heavenly Life dies and is extinguished, and we lose all sense, and relish, and tast of Heavenly things. And it is impossible it should be otherwise, for (as *John* the Baptist said, *John* 3. 31.) *He that is of the Earth, is Earthly, and speaketh of the Earth.* And while the Earthly Principle is only alive in us, it will Act according to its Nature, and we are ruled and guided by its Motions and Inspirations : And we know that this [*ψυχὴς ἀνθρώπου*] Natural Man, *Receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*, 1 Cor. 2. 14. There is a Divine quickness and sagacity that springs up in a purified Soul, whereby it readily apprehends, and has a Vital Sense of Heavenly and Divine Things, which they that are sunk and

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lost in Bodily Lusts and Passions are perfect strangers to. And not only Philosophy but Christianity tells us of Two distinct Principles in Man, which St. Paul calls by the Name of *the inner and outer Man*: And these Two have their different Motions, Tendencies and Designs. The *outer Man* is the Inheritance we derive from *Adam*, which he elsewhere, *Rom. 6. 6.* styles, [*the old Man*,] which is to be Crucified with Christ, *That the Body of Sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin.* Now this *outer Man*, or *old Adam*, is only the Corrupt Life of the Body, which leads to all manner of Impurity and Vice, and is to be Mortified and Destroyed. But the *inner Man* is ὁ ἀνθρώπος ὁ ἀληθὴς, (as *Plotinus* calls it,) the *true Man*, whose very Form and Nature consists in
pure

pure and unspotted Righteousness and Holiness ; it is the Image of the Lord from Heaven ; and as is the Heavenly *Adam*, such are they that are Heavenly. Now each of these Two Principles of Life is very diligent and industrious to Diffuse and Propagate it self ; and therefore is never wanting to offer all fit and insinuating Arguments to promote its own Interest.

Hence the Apostle St. *James*, Chap. 3. 15. tells us of a Wisdom, that is, *Earthly, Sensual, and Devilish* : Now this Wisdom is the Genuine Production, and true Offspring of the Bodily Life : 'tis the Thoughts and Projects of the *Old Adam*, and is said to be *Earthly*, because all its Designs and Purposes are laid out and contrived merely for this Earth and World wherein we live. And it is *Sensual*, because

it studies only for the Gratification of Sense and the Animal or Brutish Life : And *Devilish*, being such as only upholds the Devil's Kingdom, and promotes his Reign and Empire throughout the World. But then he says, *Verse 17.* that there is *ἡ ἀνωθεν σοφία* a *Wisdom that descends from above*, from the Father of Lights; and as it derives from Heaven, so it is still endeavouring to attract and lift up the Soul thitherward. This is that *Wisdom* which is communicated to the Soul from the Spirit of Christ, and being it self so Pure and Holy, will not dwell in a Body that is Polluted with all Carnal Excesses and Defilements. And if we should look upon the Effects of Sensuality and Debauchery, as they are Daily visible before our Eyes, we shall find that nothing does more Corrupt and Spoil our
Rational

Rational Powers. There are none that spend their whole Time in Gratifying their Carnal Lusts, but their Understandings grow Dull and Heavy, and lose their Briskness and Liveliness; their Memories are Treacherous and Decayed; and their Fancies and Imaginations serve only as a Stage to Represent and Act over again their past Filthiness and Pollutions.

3. Without this Purity of Flesh and Spirit, there is no Union of our Souls with God. Union and Communion with God are the greatest Blessings the Soul of Man can partake of: But none can think that God will dwell in a Charnel-house, or take up his Habitation among Dead Bones. And those that are given up to Bodily Pleasures, and drown themselves in Sensual De-

lights, in St. *Paul's* sense are no better than Dead, even while they Live an Earthly Life, 1 *Tim.* 5. 6. We Read indeed of Spirits conversing among the Tombs, but God will have no Society with the Dead : *It is the Living alone that praise him, and declare his Truth.* There can be no Inter-courſe nor Communion between God and ſuch a Man's Soul that has no Life ſtirring in it, but what is the very Life and Nature of the Spirits of Darkneſs, who are the moſt of all alienated and eſtranged from him. He that is *joined unto the Lord, is one Spirit,* ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 6. 17. that is, there is ſuch an intire Conſent and Agreement between ſuch an One and God, that he wills nothing and deſires nothing but what God wills and deſires. But there is is no Harmony, Conſent, or Concord, between

tween God and that Person that is joined and tied to his Bodily Lusts and Corrupt Affections. The pure Virgin-Chastity of the Soul is Violated and Defiled by Prostituting it to the Foul Embraces of Corporeal Pleasures; so that it is a kind of Spiritual Fornication or Adultery.

Now to the intent we may all endeavour to attain this Purity that God requires, and which it is our Interest to pursue, let us

1. Abstract our Souls as much as we can from Sense and Sensible Delights & Pleasures. Even a Hea-

then could say, ἡ σωματικὴ ἡδονὴ βλαβερωτέρα ἐστὶ τῇ ψυχῇ. ἐκείνη γὰρ ἀσπορὸς ἦλος *Simpl. in Epictet, p. 257. & 78.* προσηλοῖ τὴν ψυχὴν, that is, *That there is nothing more Destructive and Pernicious to the Soul, than to give it self up to Bodily Pleasures;* because they do as it were nail and bind it fast to the Earth, that

it hath no might nor strength to lift up it self towards Heaven. Therefore our Blessed Saviour requiring us to pluck out the Right Eye, and cut off the Right Hand, would have us do Violence to the Unruly Affections of the Body, and bring them low, and abate their Power by such a due Moderation, that they may never betray us to Act against Reason and Conscience. If we would endeavour to set a little loose from our Bodies, and withdraw our Hearts from Sensual Pleasures, and deny the Cravings of our Carnal Appetites, we should not only find a mighty Peace and Satisfaction within our own Breasts, but be more fitted to Converse with the God of Purity.

2. Let us frequently represent to our selves that pure state of
Angels

Angels in the upper Regions ; and that such a state cannot consist with Carnal Impurities.

Heaven is no *Mahometan* Paradise, filled with Carnal and Sensual, but Divine and Intellectual Joys and Pleasures. The time will quickly come when we shall be stript of these Earthly Bodies, which we now so fondly Dote upon, and Caress and Pamper to the fulfilling all their Impure Lusts. And therefore it were our Wisdom to separate and disjoin our Minds from their too near Intimacy and Familiarity with them ; and to dwell often and much in our Thoughts upon that Future State in which all these Corporeal Pleasures will be at an end. Then we should not be so unwilling and uneasy to leave our Bodies, but should put them off with a full Assurance, that we should not be left
Naked,

Naked, but Clothed upon with
our House from Heaven.

3. Consider how infinitely Bodily Lusts and Affections debase our Souls, and render them Brutish. Every Christians Body is or ought to be God's Temple, wherein he dwells and makes his Residence ; and it is a great Abuse and Profanation of this his Temple to make it a place for nothing but Carnal Debaucheries and Pollutions, and in our Saviour's Language, *Turning it into a Den of Thieves*, and which is all one, a Receptacle for those Unclean Spirits which sollicit Men to all Impurities. Therefore let every Man reflect with himself, that he has a Soul that was made in the Image of God, and that Christ came into the World to renew in it his Holy and Pure Image ; and therefore
that

that he ought not to turn himself into a Beast by Drunkenness, Debauchery, and Lasciviousness. For how unreasonable a thing is it, that any Man should thus fall from the Excellency of his Nature, which is fitted to Converse with God, by Associating himself only with his Brutish part ! that he should so far derogate from his Native Glory, that whereas he was first made in Honour, he should be only now fit to be compared with the Beasts that perish !

4. Lastly, Consider that this is the Field of Virtue, and herein lies true Fortitude and Courage in over-coming all the Deceitful Allurements and Inescations of Flesh and Blood. This is the Province which God has given every Man to undertake, and wherein he who is *the first and the last*, (if we be not Faithless and

and Hypocritical,) will undoubtedly give us a compleat Victory and Conquest. Here lies the Gallantry of a Noble Mind, which scorns to be enfeebled with Flesh and Blood, but soars aloft, and is impatient till it attain its Crown of Glory. For certainly 'tis the inordinacy of our Corporeal Affections that Effeminates our Spirits, and makes them so nice and tender as not to endure or undergo any thing for the sake of God and Virtue.

Ὅσα προσελη-

Whatsoever things are lovely.

After the Apostle's Exhortation to things pure, he proceeds to things that *are lovely*. For unless our Minds are first purified from all Earthly and Sensual Drugs, we are in no fit disposition to discern Intellectual Loveliness and Beauty.

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Whatsoever things are lovely, that is, Attractive and Desirable; such as carry an inward Beauty in them, and are suited and accommodated to win Favour and Friendship, and by their obliging Sweetness bind as it were the Minds of others to us. For, as there is an Inward and Natural Deformity in all Vitious Actions, so there is a Natural Pulchritude in those that are Virtuous: Which Beauty and Loveliness wherever it may be scattered, and in whatever subject it may reside, is only a Ray or Emanation from God who is the Original Fountain of all Pulchritude and Beauty. Now the Great Difficulty here will be in discerning what things are Lovely and Desirable, and what are not: For though there be never so many Amiable and Desirable Objects in the World, yet unless we have

have some *Criterion*, something into which they may be resolved, and which is able to distinguish them from others, and to discern True from False and Adulterate Beauties, it will signifie little to us.

To this Purpose therefore we ought to know, that there is an Intellectual Beauty and Loveliness, as well as that which is External and Corporeal. Hence *Plato* that Contemplative and Thinking Philosopher, speaks of a twofold *Venus*, the one is Ἀποδίτη ὑπάνιος, a Celestial *Venus*, which is nothing but the fair Pulchritude of the Divine Nature it self, which though it dwell in those upper Regions, yet has made very visible Impressions of it self upon the whole Creation; and has contracted and closely sealed that Beauty which lies dispersed and diffused in all Parts of
the

the Universe, upon all the Orders of Intellectual Beings. The other is Ἀφροδίτη πάνημορος καὶ οἶον ἑταιρίαν, a kind of Common and Harlotry *Venus*, which deriving only from the Body, and a branch of the Animal Life, draws down the Soul to what is merely Corporeal, and mingling with it, defiles and pollutes it.

Now when St. *Paul* Exhorts here to things that *are lovely*, he does not mean what is Grateful and Acceptable to this Earthly Love, but that which is agreeable and symmetrical, (as I may so speak,) with Divine and Heavenly Love. So that things are to be accounted so far Lovely, as they more or less partake of and resemble that Uncreated and Eternal Pulchritude above. And whatever things may exalt the Soul to a Participation of this Primitive and Original Beauty,
the

the practice of them is called by St. Peter, 1 *Epist.* 3. 4. *The Adorning of the hidden Man of the Heart*, whose incorruptible Glory and Excellency is seen and discovered in a meek and calm Spirit. And surely nothing in the World can be more Beautiful and Lovely than that which hath the most exact Symmetry and Conformity with that Archetypal Copy of Divine Loveliness and Beauty. Which was never made so visible to Mortal Eyes, as it was in our Blessed Lord and Saviour, who being the express Image and Character of his Fathers Person, came on purpose to restore in Men that Beautiful resemblance of the Great Author of their Being, which their Tumultuous and Disorderly Affections had Obliterated and Defaced.

It is said of Christ and his Apostles, that they increased in favour with God and Men : Of our Saviour we have it in *Luke 2. 52.* that he *increased in favour with God and Man.* And of his Apostles it is written, *Acts 2. 47.* *Praising God, and having favour with all the People.* Now surely the great things that purchased them this favour, was in general, the doing and practising all such things as were Lovely in the Eyes of all Virtuous Men. For what else could make our Saviour and his Apostles appear such excellent Persons in the World, but only the doing of all grateful and obliging things ? They left great Obligations upon all Men.

There are Two things considerable in the Person of our Saviour which will excellently well instruct us in what things are lovely.

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lovely.

lovely. For he is certainly the best Pattern we can imitate ; and by beholding the fair Character and irreprehensible Example of his Holy Life, we may learn in all general respects how to lead our own.

1. The Obligingness of his Carriage and Deportment.

2. The Innocency of his Life and Actions. As for the first of these ; Our Holy Lord was of the sweetest Nature and Temper that ever was in the World. We usually account it matter of Praise to a Person, that he is of a Fair and Obliging Temper : Behold then a Description of the best Nature that ever was Clothed in Flesh and Blood. Our blessed Master, (whose steps all Men are bound to follow,) was no Proud or Morose Person, Slighting

Slighting, Undervaluing and Contemning others; but so Humble and Meek, that he disdained not the Company of the meanest and lowest upon Earth to do them Good. Infomuch as this free and excellent Temper of his drew upon him the Envy and Hatred of the Supercilious and Censorious Pharisees, *Luke 15. 2. they upbraid him, That he received Sinners and Eat with them; and he defends himself, That he came to call Sinners to Repentance.* He did not think it below him to do good to the worst of Men. For he knew himself sent, and his Compassions extended to the Salvation of the Souls of the Meanest as well as the Greatest Persons: Being very sensible that God his Father, looked not upon Men as they were high or low in the World, but designed equally the Salvation of them all. We

read

read in *Matth.* 8. 2. that there came a Leper to Christ: If he had come to the Pharisees, they would have bidden him stand off, because he was Unclean; though they never considered the Uncleanneſs of their own Hearts, which made them appear as Deformed and Polluted in God's Eyes, as poſſibly the Leper could be in theirs: *But Jeſus put forth his Hand and touched him.* He was as willing to Heal him, as the poor Leper was to be Cleanſed.

Search but into the Goſpel, and you ſhall ſee ſuch Rays and Beams of Lovelineſs flow from our Saviour as cannot but poſſeſs your Souls with ſomething of that Mild and Amiable Glory. He was Courteous and Affable to all, and eaſie to be intreated to any Good Office that lay in his way. In *Matth.* 15. 32. it is ſaid

said, *That when the Multitude had been long with him, and had nothing to Eat, Jesus had Compassion on them.* They were in a Wilderness, a place very unfit to procure Food ; and they had a great way to go, and without some Relief might have fainted by the way. It is true, it was Christ's chief Business to distribute the Bread of Life to their Languishing Souls ; but he considered likewise the Infirmities of Humane Nature, and was willing to sustain their Bodies likewise : From whence we see, that our Saviour had rather work a Miracle, than not be helpful to the Infirmities of Mankind. Nay where there was no absolute Necessity, but only a matter of Courtesie and Good Nature, yet our Lord was willing to shew it ; *As when he turned Water into Wine at the Marriage in Canaa of Galilee.*

Galilee. All these Actions made his Soul appear with as clear and serene Loveliness, as his outward Visage when his Face was Glorious as the Sun in the Day of his Transfiguration.

But the greatest Sign of a good and excellent Nature was, his readiness to pass by Affronts and Disgraces without the least shew of Anger or Impatience. In *John* 11. 8. we read, that though the People a little before were ready to stone him, yet he goes again to teach and instruct them; as if he had clean forgotten the Wrong they intended against him. Yea, when that Execrable Traytor came by a Treacherous Kiss to betray him into the Hands of his implacable Enemies; though he had in the most shameful manner Violated all the Ties of Friendship, (being one of them that familiarly Eat of his

his Bread,) yet he gives him no harsher Language than that of Friend. And when he was Mocked and set at Naught by *Herod's* Men of War, he never uttered an Impatient Word, nor was ever heard to Revile those that Reviled him. Nor was he ever moved with Anger against any, unless it were for their obstinate Unbelief. How Amiable and Lovely was the Person of our Lord and Saviour ! How Divine and Godlike was his Carriage ! The Foundation of all true Friendship lies in Virtue, and here we may see Virtue in her most Exalted Lustre ; all those winning Graces which may Conciliate Friendship, Benevolence and Kindness. There was nothing that can possibly render any Man Grateful and Acceptable to others, but it was found in him.

He always went about doing Good, and like the Sun shedding a Salutary Influence even upon the Unthankful and Evil. If he met with any that were troubled with Bodily Pains, and desirous of his Help, he gave them Ease; if in Doubts and Perplexities, he Resolved them; shewing to the World that he came to bring Health and Happiness both to Soul and Body. As for those black and ill-favoured Passions of Malice and Revenge, they never had any place in his Heart, which was constantly inflamed with Love, whereby he forgot and forgave the Injuries he received. When the *Samaritans* rejected him, and would give him no Entertainment, his Apostles in their thoughts had already devoted them to Destruction, and want only their Master's Permission to call for Fire from Heaven to Consume

sume them, *Luke 9. 54.* But Jesus was of a better and milder Temper, and tells them, *That his Business was not to destroy Life, but to save it.*

Think with your selves now ; Was there ever a more Courteous and Obliging Nature in the World than that of Christ Jesus ? Was the Divinity it self with all its inconceivable Beauty and Glory ever more Conspicuously manifested to Flesh and Blood, than in the Person of our Blessed Lord ? These things were *Lovely* in him, and the Practice of them made him win the Respect and Favour of all Virtuous Persons wherever he came. And doubtless, the Apostle when he bids us mind things that are *Lovely*, means all these Acts of Love and Benevolence and Philanthropy which we have seen in Christ Jesus.

2. The Innocence of our Saviour's Life and Actions. As his Converse was Obliging, and his Deportment exceeding Courteous, so his Life was Innocent, and never Blemished with any Sin. All his Actions were squared by the most exact Rules and Measures of Virtue. For his most implacable Enemies could never Tax him with any Spot in his Life, or with any Unrighteous Deed during his whole Abode upon Earth. He was indeed the most useful Person that ever Lived in the World. For though a Man have never so excellent a Spirit, yet if this be wholly shut up within himself, it falls short of our Saviour's Pattern. And if Self-interest and Self-design be the Motive of Acting, whatever proceeds thence, loses all its Beauty and Loveliness. But the Purity of our Saviour's Soul, and the

the Exaltedness of that Divine Life that was in him, made him Sagacious, and of a quick Perception between things that were really Lovely, and such as were Ugly and Deformed. And these Two things rendred our Blessed Lord the most Exact and Compleat Pattern of a Lovely and Excellent Nature that ever appeared upon the Stage of the Earth. Now though we have given a General Delineation of what is *Lovely*, from the Life of our Blessed Saviour, yet perhaps it may be more easily apprehended if we reduce these General Observations into some more Particular and Distinct Heads. He therefore that would do things that are really *Lovely*, and come up as near to the Similitude of the Life of our Holy Lord and Master as he can, must Breathe nothing but Love and Good-will to the World : And 1. He

1. He must be of easie Access, and ready without any Contempt or Disdain of any Man's Person to afford his Assistance as far as he is able, to the Meanest both in Word and Deed, according as he shall find their Necessities require : Chearfully affording Counsel to the Afflicted, and binding up the Broken-Hearted, and without any Bitterness or Reproach, or Base and Shameful Flattery, making his Converse with others Sweet and Delightful.

2. He that would do things *Lovely*, must take care even in the Reprehensions and Rebukes of others for what is Amiss, that it be done with so much Candour, and Passionate Sweetness, that those whose Sins are Reproved, may clearly see, it is their Good, and Benefit, and Advan-

Advantage, that is only aimed at. For otherwise Men's Minds may rather be Exasperated than Healed, when Truth it self in such a Case is delivered with too great a Sharpness and Harshness. Men do not usually care to hear of their Faults ; but when they shall be laid open and discovered with Bitterness, Contempt and Scorn, it is so far from casting an healing Influence upon their Souls, that it provokes and inflames their Minds.

3. He that would exactly follow that which is *Lovely*, must provide that in doing Kindnesses, he do not Upbraid and Shame them upon whom he intends to confer them. There are many Persons of that tender and modest Disposition, who blush and are ashamed either to ask or to receive those Kindnesses which really

ally they want. And then, the doing things *Lovely* obliges a Man so to assist them in whatever it be, as may least of all make them Ashamed.

Now by what has been said from General Observations drawn from the Life of our Saviour, and by these few Particulars, we may competently enough understand what the Apostle means by Exhorting us to the Practice of *Whatsoever things are Lovely*.

Ὅσα ἰυφνα.

Whatsoever things are of good Report.

The last instance of Virtue the Apostle makes use of, is to persuade us to the practice of such things as are of *good Report* : By which we are taught to think of and do all such things as may purchase us a Good Name, and Esteem,

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they may make things Vitious in themselves to be called by the Name of Virtues. But since there is a God, (and none but Fools can think otherwise,) we are assured that all Virtue derives from him, and is a participation of his Image and Nature, and Consequently that there is an Essential Difference in the Nature of things. And God hath Copied out and Engraven this his Image upon the Souls of Men, whereby all Men that have a due use of their Faculties, have likewise the differences of Good and Evil deeply Sealed upon their Minds, and they cannot change them at their Pleasure.

Hence it comes to pass that such Actions as are Conformable and Agreeable to those Intellectual Laws and Principles which God has fixed in our Minds, they are Virtuous and Praise-worthy ;
and

True it is, Fame and Reputation is a thing that is mightily sought

sought after, even by those that are no great Admirers of the strictness of Virtue ; and there is in all Men a secret Desire and Tendency towards the Embalming and Consecrating their Names to after Ages. Of which no other Reason can be given, but that there are some secret Convictions and Natural Presages of a State of Immortality after this Life, in all Men's Minds. There is something that whispers to them, and mixes it self with all their Thoughts and Actions, that they have something in them that shall survive their Ashes, and Live and Act when their Bodies are Dead and Rotten in the Grave. And from hence they Naturally Affect and Desire a Continuation of themselves, and a kind of Immortality in this Life. And this sets them upon those various Ways and Methods

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of the Purchase and Acquisition of it ; some by Valour and Heroick Actions, others by Honour, and some by the increase of their Posterity : Which evidently shews the Desires and Inclinations of all Men to continue and live for ever upon Earth, at least in their Fame, and Names, and Memory, although they are withdrawn from it as to their Personal Beings. Thus we Read, *Psal. 49. 11. of some whose inward thought was, That their Houses should continue for ever, and they call their Lands after their own Names, i. e.* Many Men seeing that themselves are Mortal, and quickly Die, yet desire to perpetuate their Names, and that their Memory should Live after them : Whereas this only shews, that there is implanted in Men Naturally a Sense, that there are things of good Report,

which will procure Fame, and Esteem, and a Good Name, while they Live here, and continue it when they are gone from hence: But they mistook in the Ways and Means of Attaining it.

But now true Religion assures us, that it is only the sincere Practice of Virtue that will advance a Good Name, and purchase Esteem here, and continue it after Death; according to that of the Scripture, *The Righteous shall be had in Everlasting Remembrance.* It is true, many a Wicked Man's Name is Remembred, but then 'tis to his Infamy and Disgrace. Therefore it is said, *Prov. 10. 7. The Name of the Wicked shall Rot, i. e. it shall be as Offensive and Unpleasant as a Dead and Rotten Carcass.* We Read of a Covetous and Treacherous *Judas* who sold his Master,

ster, but we Detest and Abhor his Memory : And of a Cruel and Bloody *Herod*, but with almost as keen a Passion as those sorrowful Mothers felt at the Death of their little Infants. Thus every Wicked Man, if he be at all Remembred, 'tis with some Infamous Character and Note of Disgrace ; as that he was a Profane, and Debauch'd, or a Lascivious, Covetous, or Unjust Person ; and it were better that our Names Perish for Ever, and we descend into a Common and Ignoble Grave, than to be thus Remembred.

2. We are informed, that the proper Judges of things of *good Report*, are Virtuous and Wise Persons. Among all those things that are Valuable with Men, there is none, (or at least ought not to be any,) of so high an Esteem

Esteem as true Virtue ; which being the Image of God Communicated unto Man, it follows, that things are only so far of *good Report* as they are Virtuous. And hence it is, that the true Judg of what is Virtuous, and what is not, must be the Wise and Virtuous Man himself. For he being plentifully endued with, and perfectly awakened into this high and exalted Principle of Life, he presently feels and knows, and has a quick tast and rellish of what is agreeable to that Divine Life which his Soul is so thoroughly possessed of : And being perfectly Dead to all Sensual Affections which may Cloud or Distract his Judgment, he instantly discerns the least Blemishes and Corruptions of Life, and so becomes perfectly inabled to determin what is Laudable and Praise-worthy, and of *good Report* :

port : This Internal Sense of his being as fitly qualified to discern its proper Objects, as the clear Eye is to discern Light and Colours. But as for Men of Depraved Souls, and Wicked Lives, they are no more able to determine and define things of *good Report*, than Swines are to Judge of the Symmetry of a Beautiful Picture.

So that when we speak of things of *good Report*, we must take our Measures from what the best and wisest Persons in all Times and Ages have accounted so. And for a Man to undervalue the Judgment of such who have jointly and unanimously concluded from that inward Sense they have of Virtue, that such and such Actions are Laudable, and of *good Report*, and the contrary Dishonest and Base, is

no better than a great piece of
Pride and Arrogance.

3. He that purchases a good
Name by Virtue, he purchases
the greatest Treasure that is to be
had in this World. Therefore
Solomon says, *Prov. 22. 1. That
a good Name is rather to be chosen
than great Riches.* Because Riches
are something without us, and do
not at all contribute to the Per-
fection of the Soul ; but things
of *good Report* being nothing but
the effects of Virtue, and of that
Life which is the true Being of
the Soul, they are inseparable
from it. Moreover the Virtuous
Man cannot fail by such Actions
of making many Friends, which
are, (as *Boethius* speaks,) *Pre-
tiosissimum divitiarum genus, The
most pretious kind of Riches.*
And further, our good or ill
Fame is not peremptorily confi-
ned

ned to this World, but passes before us into the next : And every Man by his good or bad Behaviour brings a good or ill Report of himself in the Regions of Spirits, before he comes to dwell and converse with them. If we be Wicked, we are as much scorned there, and our Names as Hateful, as the Names of *Judas* or *Herod*. The Angels and separate Spirits quickly know what we are, (for those discerning Spirits are not easily deceived,) and the Fame of our Doings arrives to them before we leave the World. Those Blessed Spirits are said to Rejoyce at the Conversion of a Sinner, *Luke 15. 10.* which is an evident Testimony that our good or evil Behaviour readily comes to their Notice and Cognizance. And surely 'tis no small damage to have an ill Report among those who should

should Assist us and Minister to us in our Wants and Necessities.

4. By doing things of *good Report*, we consult not only our own Esteem, but the Credit of that Holy Religion we profess. It is said, *1 Sam. 2. 17.* that the Sin of *Elie's* Sons made *Men abhor the Offering of the Lord*. Their Sinful and Vicious manner of Living brought an ill Report upon themselves, and it redounded likewise to God's Dishonour, and caused Men to Slight and Despise and Undervalue his Worship and Service. So it is with us, when we deservedly by some Evil Action bring an ill Report upon our selves; the Dishonour lights not only upon us, but reflects on God, and that Holy Religion that we profess. Thus it is said likewise of *David*,
2 Sam.

2 Sam. 12. 14. *That by his Sin he had given cause to the Enemies of the Lord to BlaspHEME.* When they saw so Holy a Man as *David* fall so foully into Sin, they would be apt to despise Religion it self, and cry out, *Is this the fruit of Religion?* And when those that are Christians shall commit Dishonest and Abominable Actions; when they shall allow themselves in the Practice of Open and Scandalous Sins, Wicked and Prophane Persons are apt to traduce and speak Evil of Religion it self. Thus our Holy Lord and his Religion which he Sealed with his own Blood is Despised and Contemned through the Bad Lives of those that Profess it. It should therefore be our Care to consult the Credit of Religion, and to make it appear Lovely, (as it is) in all Men's Eyes, by our practising all
such

such things as are favoured and well esteem'd by all the Lovers of Virtue. When we go to the House of God, and tread his Sacred Courts, we should use no light and trifling Behaviour, but compose both our Souls and Bodies with that Awful Reverence as becomes the Presence of God and his Holy Angels. Our Devotion should be grave, serious and fervent, without any Affect- edness, or vain desire of Ostenta- tion. And we should make it appear that our Hearts are in- wardly touched and inflamed with that unimitable Love of Christ in Dying for the World, by our frequent Communicating of his Blessed Body and Blood. For these things, as they are mat- ters of *good Report*, and will cer- tainly procure favour and esteem, so they shew that Religion has something that is really valuable
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in it, and that Christianity is the choicest Wisdom that ever was communicated to Mankind.

If we would therefore do things that are of *good Report*, we ought

1. To put in Practice all these forementioned Virtues, and whatever else is Laudable and Praiseworthy. The Honour and Credit of Religion is never better secured, than by a due Regard to its Sacred Laws and Institutions. Though we profess to own Truth, yet if we are always wavering and unsettled, and tossed about with every wind of Doctrine; if we are not true to our Words and Promises, but Falsify and Dissemble and Lie one to another, we seem not to be over-jealous of her Honour. Nor can we be said to consult the Credit of our Holy Profession, while by the

the Lightness, Vanity, and Unbecomingness of our Actions, we express no Veneration for it. Who can believe that we are in Earnest when we talk of Justice, and yet do not endeavour to frame our Conversations by that excellent Rule of doing as we would be done by? A Discourse of the Sanctity and Purity of Angels will little affect others, while we our selves wallow in the Mire and Sink of all Carnal Lusts and Pollutions. Should we tell Men of an Internal Beauty and Loveliness in things, yet it would be but Words spent to no purpose, unless we demonstrate our knowledge of it by doing lovely and obliging Actions. It is the faithful discharge of our Duty that conciliates Reverence and Esteem to Religion, and promotes a fair Reputation to our selves, when Men shall see that we are in Earnest

ness by our unblamable Conversations. Which is according to that sound Admonition of the Apostle, 1 Pet. 2. 12. *Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, Glorify God in the day of Visitation.* Notwithstanding all the Malicious Cavils, and Atheistical Objections made against Religion, yet a true Christian that walks answerably to his Profession, must gain at the last a Repute and Esteem from all that are Lovers of God and Virtue.

2. If we would do things of good Report, and which may purchase us a good Name amongst Men, we must carefully avoid, not only the open practice of Vice, but whatever may have any

any suspicion in the Minds of Men of Vice. And this is called by the Apostle, *An abstaining from all appearance of Evil*, 1 Thess. 5. 22. Whether that signifie from every sort or kind of Evil, or from every thing that bears the likeness, appearance, or shew of a Sin. For he that will venture as near to the Confines and Borders of Sin as he can, seems to declare a Tacit Liking and Approbation of it, and consequently exposes himself to the hazard of being Betrayed and Surprized, and so of losing his Credit and Reputation. Therefore a Wary and Cautious Christian, (and such it behoves every Man to be,) will studiously avoid every thing that may cause the least Jealousie in the Hearts of others of his Sincerity.

There are many things which are not directly Sinful, yet to another

other who has not that Maturity and Ripeness of Understanding, may prove an occasion of Stumbling and Falling, and therefore are not to be done by him who would acquire a good Esteem and Reputation. It is true, if a thing that is in it self indifferent be, upon weighty Reasons and Grounds commanded by Law ; and another through Weakness is scandalized at the use of it, it is a thing which a good Christian cannot help ; and there is an Offence taken, but not given : Though it were to be wished that there were as few of these Stumbling Blocks laid before Weaker Persons, as may fairly consist with the Honour and Interest of Religion it self.

3. He that would acquire a Good Name and Reputation, must

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take care that in all his Actings with others he be sincere ; *i. e.* upon all Emergences, he must practise Virtue for Virtues sake, because it is in it self the best and most desirable thing in the World. For if in our Conversation we proceed upon Sinister Ends, and that Self-advantage and Interest be the Measure of our Actions, besides that it redounds to the discredit of Religion, it casts a Disgrace upon us, and we so far deviate from the Principles of true Virtue, as Selfishness is concerned in our Actions. And the Reason is, because he that makes a fair show of some Virtuous Actions, merely to compass Self-Advantage, does hereby manifestly declare, that if it were not for this Private and Self-Love, he would not do them ; which the generality of Mankind must needs look upon as a gross piece

of Hypocrisie and Diffimulation ;
than which nothing can be a
greater Enemy to our true Cre-
dit and Reputation.

Thus you have an Account of
the several Virtues, to the pra-
ctice of which the Apostle so se-
riously Exhorts us. And he that
has any Care for the Peace of his
Conscience in this Life, and his
Eternal Happiness hereafter, will
carefully think on these things.
Which that we may all do, He
who is the Author and Finisher of
our Faith grant to us ; to whom
be all Honour and Glory both
now and for evermore. *Amen.*

A
DISCOURSE
OF
Sincerity.

John 1. 47.

— *Behold an Israelite indeed,
in whom is no guile.*

THESE Words our Saviour spake of *Nathanael*, who is reckoned one of the Twelve Apostles, though called by another Name; for we find him expressly mentioned with them, *John 21. 2.* This Person being brought by *Philip* to Jesus, when he was come

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within

within distance or hearing, Christ says, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* As if our Lord had said, See here a Man of that Integrity, Simplicity, and Sincerity, which is highly valued and prized in God's sight. And though this were spoken particularly of that Apostle, yet it instructs us in this Great and Weighty Truth, *That Sincerity is the great Accomplishment and Perfection of a Christian in God's sight.* For it is no new thing for true Christians to be called in Scripture by the Name of *Israelites* : For St. Paul expresses it so in more than one place in plain terms, *Rom. 9. 6. They are not all Israel which are of Israel, i. e.* though they may Lineally descend from *Israel*, yet it is only those that are *Sincere* that are the proper *Israelites*, or true Christians. So again, *Rom. 2. 28.*

Now

Now to be without Guile here, is to be Sincere and without Hypocrisie ; whereby it appears, that a Man is Valued and Esteemed in the Eyes of God according to his Sincerity.

And this sometimes is represented by the Name of Truth : *I have no greater Joy, (says St. John, Ep. 3. 4.) then to hear that my Children walk in Truth ;* that is, that they are Sincere Christians. I am sure it was St. Paul's great Comfort when he supposed himself near his Death, *2 Cor. 1. 12. That in Sincerity and Godly Simplicity, he had his Conversation in the World.* He neither flattered himself, nor those that heard him, but told them the plain Truth, shewing them both by what he himself, and they, must hope to go to Heaven : And this was the downright Sincerity of his Heart,

when he had no doublings, windings, or turnings with God, but endeavoured as far as ever he could to please him, and do his Will. This alone has the Promise of Heaven, and upon this the Blessed Land of Righteousness, the Pleasant Mansions of Immortality are Entailed. This is the Complement and Perfection of Holiness, without which all our Religion is but a mere Shadow & Pageantry. For then only is the Soul of Man said to be Sincere, when it is fully and wholly carried out after that which is simply and absolutely the best.

And all Men that have any sense of Religion, must own, that God and the Participation of his Nature, is absolutely and above all Comparison the best thing in the World: And to attain to a Union with God cannot be denied to be the greatest of all Happi-

Happiness the Mind of Man is capable of. And since this is not only simply the best, but the utmost and compleat Felicity of our Nature, it follows that Sincerity is then most perfect, when our Wills with all their Affections and Desires are fully and wholly carried out after it. Fully and wholly (I say) that is, without any By-ends, or Self-designs, or Sinister Respects of particular Fame, or Gain, or any such thing, but merely upon a clear Knowledg that it is the best thing in the whole Creation. For he whose Intention is not directed aright, can hardly attain that excellent Qualification our Saviour so much commended in his Apostle.

Now to the end we may judge of our own Sincerity, we may resolve our selves by these Two plain Notes or Characters.

1. If

1. If our Religion be as well in Private as in Publick.

For he that confines his Religion only to the Church, or to a Festival-Day, is like those Heathens that Chained up their gods, for fear they should run away, and they should never find them again. But when we are hearty in Religion, and it be deeply sealed and impressed upon our Souls, it will exert and shew it self, as well when none but God is present, as if Ten Thousand Eyes of Men were upon it. For since we believe that God is Omnipresent, and that the bright Eyes of Eternity are ever broad awake, and looking upon us, it argues little Fear and Veneration of that Holy Being, if we can dare commit a Sin in his presence, though no other Being in the World were privy to it. Therefore when all Circumstances are fair and inviting,

ing, and concur to the Acting a pleasant or profitable Vice with the greatest Secrecy and Impunity; then to Abstain and Hate the Sin out of a Religious Fear of offending God, and debasing our own Souls, it is a good Argument that the Purposes of our Hearts are Right and Sincere.

2. If we adhere to God, and keep firm in the ways of Virtue, as well in Adversity as Prosperity.

It is easie to be Religious when God incircles us with his Blessings, and Rains down Pearls as it were into our Mouths; but when he hides his Face, and writes bitter things against us, and a Storm of Miseries and Afflictions from without blows hard upon us, then to be Virtuous is truly Honourable and Praise-worthy. And as it is no great Credit

dit to practise a Virtue that is in Fashion, or to Adorn our selves with a Modish Piety : But to follow Virtue through rough and uneven Paths, and to be Religious when Holiness is contemned and disgraced ; that shews a steady Resolution, and that a Man Loves God because he is the most Excellent Being.

These Notes and Characters of Sincerity are few and plain, and by them we may examine our own Hearts, and discern whether there be any Hypocrisie in them or not : And by these we may discover the state of our Souls, without perplexing our selves with a Multitude of Evidences and Signs of our Salvation, which it may be upon an exact search may prove either Impertinent or Unreasonable. Nay certainly he that is thoroughly possessed with a Vigorous Sense of
God

God and Virtue, and makes it his whole business incessantly to breath after, though with the loss and hazard of all these Worldly Enjoyments, yea even of Life it self, shall find a more lasting Comfort, and a stronger Security for Heaven flowing from his own Soul, than if an Angel should tell him he was Ordained to a Celestial Happiness.

And we have the more reason to endeavour after this Integrity and Uprightness of Heart, from its great Necessity and apparent Usefulness. There are Two main Seasons or Times of Tryal of a Christian, wherein a Sincere and Candid Breast will be his greatest Strength and Support. And these are,

1. The Days of Affliction and Calamity. Prosperity is a very false Glass, and most commonly represents

represents us to our selves in other Colours and Features than really we are. But Adversity and Affliction wipes off all this Painted Gloss and Varnish, and shews us the true Face of things. And in this Case, a Formal and Hypocritical Dress will do us no good. While we can draw Waters at our own Cisterns, we speak well of God, and make a chearful Profession of Religion : But when a severe Providence dries up the Well-springs of our Comforts, and leads us through a Scorching Wilderness, wherein we Combat with fierce and fiery-flying Serpents, then is the time of Tryal. And indeed the True and Native Glory of Virtue, is never made so Visible and Conspicuous, as when it is surrounded and begirt with the greatest Dangers.

Adversity

Adversity is a proper mean to discover, whether our Love to God and Virtue be Sincere and Unfeigned, or whether it be Counterfeit and Adulterate. Which our Saviour intimated in a Parable in the Gospel, where the Scorching Beams of the Sun, [*i. e.* the Times of Misery and Tribulation,] quickly shew'd the difference of the Soil wherein that Divine Seed was cast.

2. The Hour of Death is another of those Times which will discover our Sincerity. Men have not the same Apprehensions of Sin in their Health and Strength, as when they are drawing near their End, and entring upon the borders of another World. For as the Body in Sicknes Loaths even those things that were most grateful and pleasant in its Health: So is it with the Mind or Spirit :
When

When it foresees that 'tis hastning to another and stranger World, it distasts and hates the thoughts of those Sins it so freely Acted and Indulged it self in before. For then the Body, which is the Root and Occasion of Sin, being broken and out of order, the Soul may more freely and clearly behold the difference between Good and Evil, and accordingly is more sensibly affected with it. And the clearer sight we have of Sin and Wickedness, the greater is that Horror and Fear the Conscience inflicts upon us, when we are sensible of our own Guilt. Now since the Hour of Death and Dissolution of our Earthly Tabernacles makes so perfect a Representation of Things to us, stripped of all their outward Appearances, and divested of that Paint and Flourish we put upon them ; it must needs be a mighty support

support and comfort to find the Face of our Souls Calm and Smooth, and our selves not burdened with the Heaviness and Weight of Guilt.

But when the Sins of our past Days come into our Remembrance, and we consider how False we have been to God and our own Souls ; when it may be we have betrayed our Faith and Religion to support a frail and tottering Interest in this World ; there will then be little else but a dismal Scene of Horror presented to our Eyes. The nearness of our Approach to that State wherein we must dwell for ever, strikes a Chilness and Coldness to our very Hearts. And all because we have lost that Hope and Confidence which flows from Sincerity, when we have done our best to serve God.

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And if now I should endeavour to bring into view this Frame and Temper of Spirit which we call *Sincerity*, Clothed with all its Native Richness and Glory, I should sooner want Words to express it, than be able fully to represent the Excellency of it. Its Beauty is so faultless and irreprehensible, and the sweetness of its Nature so great, that there is nothing on Earth so Lovely and so Desirable. 'Tis such a State of Soul, which he that is possessed of, would not lose; and he that has it not, (if he knew but the worth of it,) would give all the World, (if he had it in his power,) to purchase it. For certainly, if ever Virtue could be made Visible to Mortal Eyes, it must be by this Excellent Frame and Temper of Mind which we term *Sincerity*. It hath all that Excellency and Worth

Worth that *Solomon* speaks of Wisdom, which indeed is nothing but the Perfection of *Sincerity*. It is better than Rubies, and all the things that are to be desired, are not to be compared to it. The Fruit of it is better than Gold, and the Revenue than choice Silver. *Who* finds Sincerity, findeth Life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. Which is enough one would think to render so Charming a Qualification highly valuable in our Eyes; since there is nothing that is Noble and Good, but is some way or other contained in it.

But if this be too general a Representation of the Worth of it; take it more particularly.

I. Sincerity alleviates all Crosses and Afflictions. Troubles, Vexations, Miseries, and Disappointments make up a very

Great part of Humane Life. The Son of God himself was not exempted from Humane Miseries, but made his way unto Glory through Death and the Grave. And it is our Lot and Portion to arrive at our Blessedness through many Tribulations; neither must we forget that the Passage to the Celestial Paradise lies through a Valley of Tears. Therefore since we cannot hope to be perfectly freed from Calamities and Vexatious Circumstances in this Life, our next enquiry must be how to alleviate and make them tolerable. And the most certain way for this, is to be Sincere, *i. e.* to have our Minds fully and wholly carried out after God and Virtue.

When a Man falls into Calamity through his own Folly, or that a Great and Heinous Sin has been the immediate Cause of his Affliction,

Affliction, he loses his Peace and Quiet, because his Conscience tells him that those things might have been avoided. But when Tribulations arise from the Decree of Heaven, and that a Man's Troubles are the effects of Divine Goodness, and sent as fit Opportunities to make Tryal of his Patience, Resignation and Humility; then the Mind is quiet, submissive and composed, because when it looks back, it hath no ugly and staring Sins to affright it. From whence it evidently follows, that if we are immutably fixed and grounded in the Sincere Love of God and Goodness, we cannot be hurt by any Affliction. Nay, the greatest Misery and Calamity will be eased, and the smart of it taken off, because, while we are Sincere, our Hearts assure us of better Usage, and a more Comforta-

ble State in another World. So that, let it be loss of Friends, loss of Liberty and Estate, or whatever else is accounted a Happiness in this Life, yet a Sincere Person knows that he is befriended by the Holy and Kind Beings of the invisible World; that a tender Providence shrouds him under its Wings, and will hereafter recompence this short and light Affliction with a Great and Eternal Weight of Glory.

2. Sincerity contains whatever is truly desirable by the heart of Man. Are we pleased and delighted with a Beautiful Object? Can there be any thing more Beautiful and Lovely, than a Calm and Serene Soul, whose Glory and Lustre is not so concealed and obscured within, but it diffuses and communicates such Rays and Beams of Mild and Unfeigned

feigned Simplicity, even in the Eyes and outward Visage, as must needs affect every Rational Being with Admiration and Love? Do Riches appear Splendid and Glorious? What Riches can be comparable to this inestimable Treasure of Simplicity and Sincerity? And when the Mind is Adorned and Clothed with this, it is much more Bright and Dazeling than *Solomon's* Glorious Apparel and Robes of Royalty. Besides, Riches are fugitive and uncertain, whereas Sincerity is such a Treasure as can neither be taken from us, nor ever exhausted or drawn dry. Do the Pleasures of this World affect our Hearts? We are to consider then, that in the Judgment of all Wise Men, the Pleasures of the Mind are much more Noble than those of the Body: And Sincerity in this exceeds all

Earthly and Corporeal Pleasures, in that it never burdens us with Satiety, nor torments us with the Fear of its Decay. Could we be delighted with Honour? Then know that the highest Honour in the World is to be like to God, who is the Greatest Unity and Simplicity. Sincerity is a Uniform thing, always steady, and one and the same for ever; but Hypocrisie and Dissimulation is Changeable and Various, and goes always under a disguise. In a Word, search all that any way appears grateful and desirable by the Heart of Man, and this Excellent Qualification of Sincerity will be found to be much more Eligible. This Unites our Minds with God, and fits us to Converse with Angelical Spirits, whose Natures are so much the more Excellent and Exalted, as they partake more of Uniformity and Simplicity.

3. The

3. The very Perfection of Holiness consists in Sincerity. For certainly the most perfect State of Angels in the Regions of Glory consists in this, that they love and serve God truly according to the utmost of their Powers. And this is what every Man may and ought to do. It is true, in this Life our Affections cannot be so vigorous and enlarged, nor our Desires so comprehensive as those of an Angel; but they may be as Sincere and without Dissimulation. There is a great abatement and allowance to be made to the Variety of Humane Imbecillity and Imperfection. All Men are not born Philosophers, and the very Notion of a Spiritual Being makes not the same lively and Impression upon all, but he that retains such a Sense of it as keeps him steady and firm in the Practice of Virtue, shall

shall never be forgotten by Divine Goodness. Though all our Services are mean and poor, yet they may be hearty and unmixt ; and we may express a Cordial Sense of our Love to God, though that Holy Fire do not flame and sparkle with the Brightness of a Seraphim. Virtue and Goodness is not always to be measured by the highest Degrees, but by the Truth, Plainness and Simplicity of it.

4. Sincerity brings the truest Pleasure in the World. For as all Corporeal Pleasure consists in the exercise of the Senses, and is more or less according as it affects them : So when the Soul is Sincere, there arises in it a true sense and taste of Righteousness, which brings an ineffable Pleasure along with it. It must be granted indeed, that this lively and pleasant

pleasant sense of Virtue, and that Gratefulness that springs from it, is a thing that is not to be made known by Words, but is only perceived by the inward sense of the Soul it self. And hence a Carnal and Animal Man may enjoy himself in Sensual Delights, while in the mean time he is a mere stranger to that Noble Pleasure that results from Virtue ; because that Principle which should tast the relish and sweetness of it, is yet asleep in him. Moreover all Earthly Pleasures are muddy and defiled, and have a tast of the Cask, that is, the Body wherein they Lodg : But the Pleasures of Virtue are Refined, and run pure and clear for ever. Because the Spring whence Virtuous Pleasure derives, is Sincerity, which is a State and Condition pure and unmixed, with-

without any Art or Adulterated Compositions.

5. Sincerity begets a generous Boldness and Magnanimity. No Man can be more confident of the well-being of his Soul than the Sincere Person ; and this Confidence makes him look Afflictions and Dangers undauntedly in the Face. The Sincere Person whose Conscience can Testifie to him that he hath fathfully endeavoured to Serve and Obey God, is fully assured, (however it may fare with him here, yet) it shall go well with him in the other World. He knows that God will never be unkind to an Innocent or Penitent Person ; and is assured that he can never forsake what is his own Life and Nature, which surely an Unself-Interested and Universaliz'd Love is.

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Wherefore such a One, though it were in the Agonies of Death it self, can chearfully commit himself into the Gracious Hands of God, and with an Humble Confidence trust himself with the invifible Guards of thofe higher and better Regions. For what fhall feparate us from the Love of God, faith St. *Paul*? Nothing furely, if our own Hearts do not Condemn us of Hypocrifie; for then we may reft fecure of God's Love, who always Loves for the fame Reason: And his Love is Immutable and never changes, till we change by Inadvertencey and Folly.

6. Laftly, Sincerity fills the Soul with an Eternal Peace, and fecures it from all Inteftine Broils, Diftractions and Tumults. It is this lower and troubled Air that
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is subject to Thunder and Storms, while those upper Regions above the Clouds enjoy a perpetual Sunshine and Calm. And it is Hypocrisie and Dissimulation, and a Guiltiness and Consciousness that we have been False to God and Virtue, that raises Storms and Troubles within our own Breasts. But Sincerity sets us above all these, and we Breathe in a Freer and Purer Air, and our Souls are Calm and Composed, Fair and Lovely, as the Clear Face of Heaven. In this Soil grows the Tree of Life, and here are those Rivers of Living Waters, which overflow and enrich the Paradise of God.

In a Word, this State of Sincerity is a more valuable Treasure than all the World. 'Tis every thing that a Man can desire, because it makes him beloved of God who is an Infinite Fulness

Fulness of all Happiness and Perfection. After this State we ought earnestly to contend, and never leave off our pursuit till we have attained to it. This delights the Heart of God and Man, and is so enravishing a Temper, that our Saviour could not but commend it in his Holy Apostle. Now that we may all press forward to this Mark, God of his Infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ, to whom with the Holy Spirit be all Honour and Glory now and for evermore. *Amen.*

F I N I S.
